No. 300 / APRIL 1998

THE NI
NEW INTERNATIONALIST

The body
The world made flesh

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◆

THE PEOPLE, THE IDEAS, THE ACTION IN THE FIGHT FOR WORLD DEVELOPMENT

COMING NEXT MONTH

Cuba

On the cusp of change

RHODRI JONES / APNOS

The Cuban revolution was one of this century's great victories against tyranny. Now the country is again poised on the brink of momentous change. Fidel Castro and the generation of guerilla fighters who brought socialism to the Caribbean nation are nearing the end of their political lives. Meanwhile, an anxious group of younger leaders waits in the wings. Join us as we tour the island to find out which path Cuba will take after Fidel and what the future holds for Cuban socialism.

- ★ Structural adjustment Cuban style
- ★ Rationing and the 'special period'
- ★ Dollars and pesos – market reforms and socialism
- ★ Life on the land
- ★ Green guerillas – urban agriculture
- ★ Tourist apartheid
- ★ The eagle has landed – America's naval base in Cuba
- ★ Democracy and dissent

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The New Internationalist exists to report on the issues of world poverty and inequality; to focus attention on the unjust relationship between the powerful and powerless in both rich and poor nations; to debate and campaign for the radical changes necessary within and between those nations if the basic material and spiritual needs of all are to be met; and to bring to life the people, the ideas and the action in the fight for world development.

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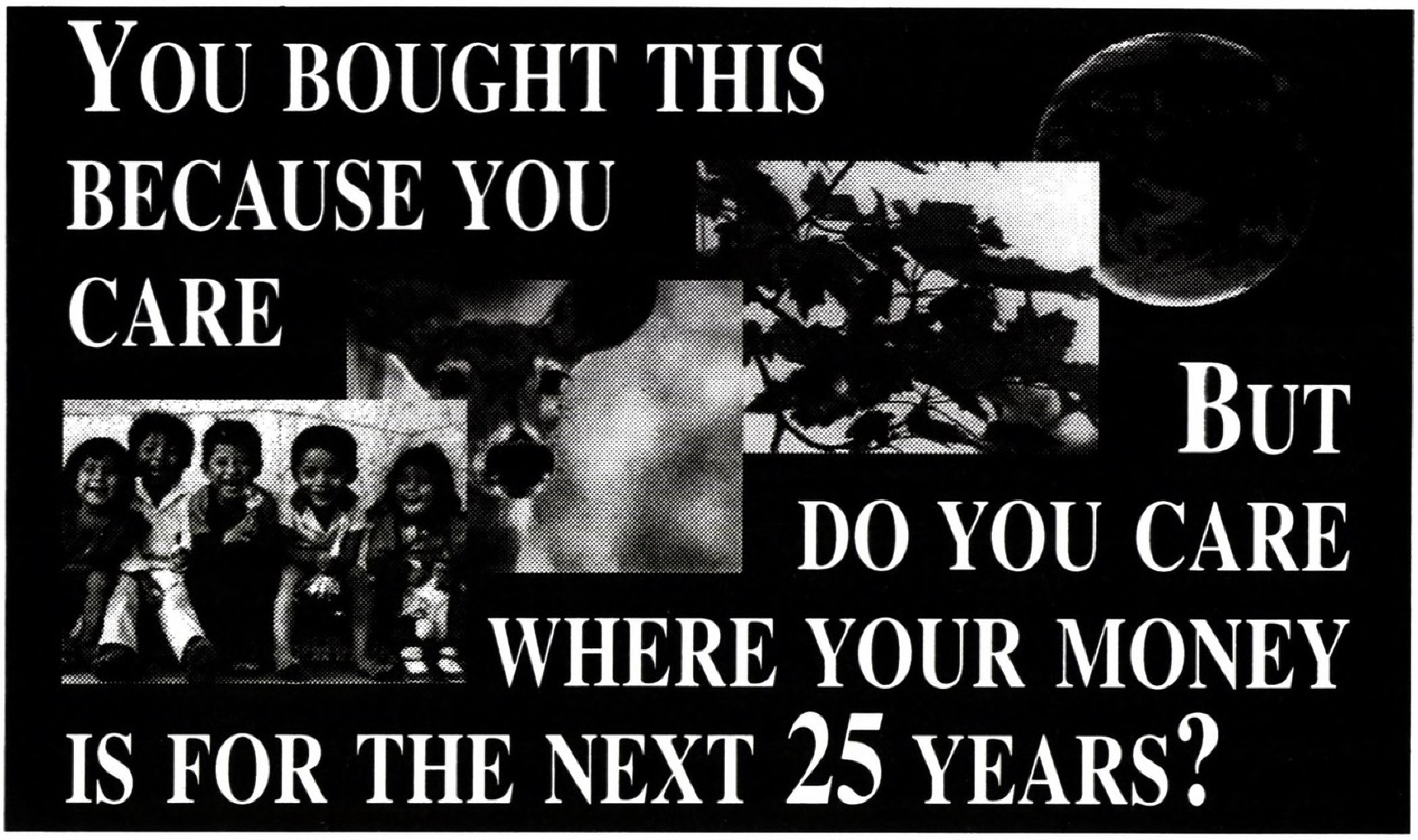
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Bulgaria in Crisis

Emergency Appeal to New Internationalist Readers

Children like Yordan, 1 ½, already malnourished could die from hunger this April unless help reaches them. With temperatures still plummeting to below freezing in the mountain orphanages Yordan's scant clothing and no shoes offer him little protection from the bitter cold and there is no money to heat his orphanage. There are 37,000 places in Bulgaria's orphanages.

No Money To Feed The Children
No Money To Heat The Orphanages

Bulgaria is a country in the midst of a serious economic crisis. Now thousands of children are suffering terribly. Urgent help is needed.

There is little money to heat the orphanages. Orphanage Directors are having to beg for food from local villages and rarely know where the next meal is coming from. In some areas children, like Yordan, are going hungry – and the cold could still prove fatal. Without aid this could be catastrophic for Bulgaria's orphanage children.

The European Children's Trust, sister charity of The Romanian Orphanage Trust, is ready to distribute emergency food packs, clothes and fuel to the orphanages in most need.

Your gift today will save lives and bring hope.

- **£28 could buy enough emergency food packs to feed 20 orphanage children for a week or heat an orphanage for 3 days.**

Please send whatever you can to help prevent children suffering or call 01273 299399 NOW

I enclose £__________ to save Bulgarian orphanage children. Cheques to The European Children's Trust. Or debit my Access/Visa/CAF card

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The European Children's Trust

Please act NOW to save these children

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FRONT COVER BY MICHELLE LOUISE DIANN DRY.
MAGAZINE DESIGNED BY **IAN NIXON**.

THIS MONTH'S **THEME**

The body

FROM THIS MONTH'S **EDITOR**

THERE'S strength in numbers, or so they say. And numerologists would ascribe to them more potent powers besides. I've never felt any particular fascination with numerals myself. But I am nonetheless somewhat awed by the fact that this is the 300th issue of the **NI**.

Not bad going for a publication that, at the outset, few believed would run into more than a handful of issues. People in the industrialized world might have had an interest in the then more readily-termed 'Third World' but that didn't mean they needed a magazine about it. Not unless they were doing business there, or were planning to.

One of the reasons the **NI** has survived could be that right from the start its originators believed that if the magazine were to report on the so-called 'developing' world then it really had to bring the issues home to the reader. It had to make connections across all sorts of divides – economic, geographic, racial, gender – to express the commonality of humanity. And to do that effectively it had to be personal.

There can be few more personal subjects than 'the body'. And few more universal and contradictory ones. The body is both a playground and a battlefield; the site where both the greatest tenderness occurs and the most brutal inequalities are acted out.

It's maybe significant that most social and cultural study of 'the body' during the past 20 years or so has come from the sidelines. It's come from radicals – feminists, philosophers, psychoanalysts – who questioned mainstream culture, the dominance of patriarchy or capitalism, in a very fundamental way.

Underlying several articles in this issue is the same questioning spirit. Some directly prompt the question: 'What on earth is going on?' Nancy Scheper-Hughes' shocking article on the growing traffic in human organs for transplant is one such piece. Hopefully it will help stimulate action to regulate the more gruesome and abusive excesses of this trade. While Zachary I Nataf's piece on transgender and intersex conditions – and how various cultures treat people who do not fit the norms of gender polarity – raises rather different kinds of questions. But it will, I imagine, make many of its readers sit up and think, and re-think.

Who knows how many more issues of the **NI** there will be? Tens, hundreds, thousands? Nothing can be taken for granted, or at face value, but then that's part of what the *New Internationalist* is all about.

Vanessa Baird

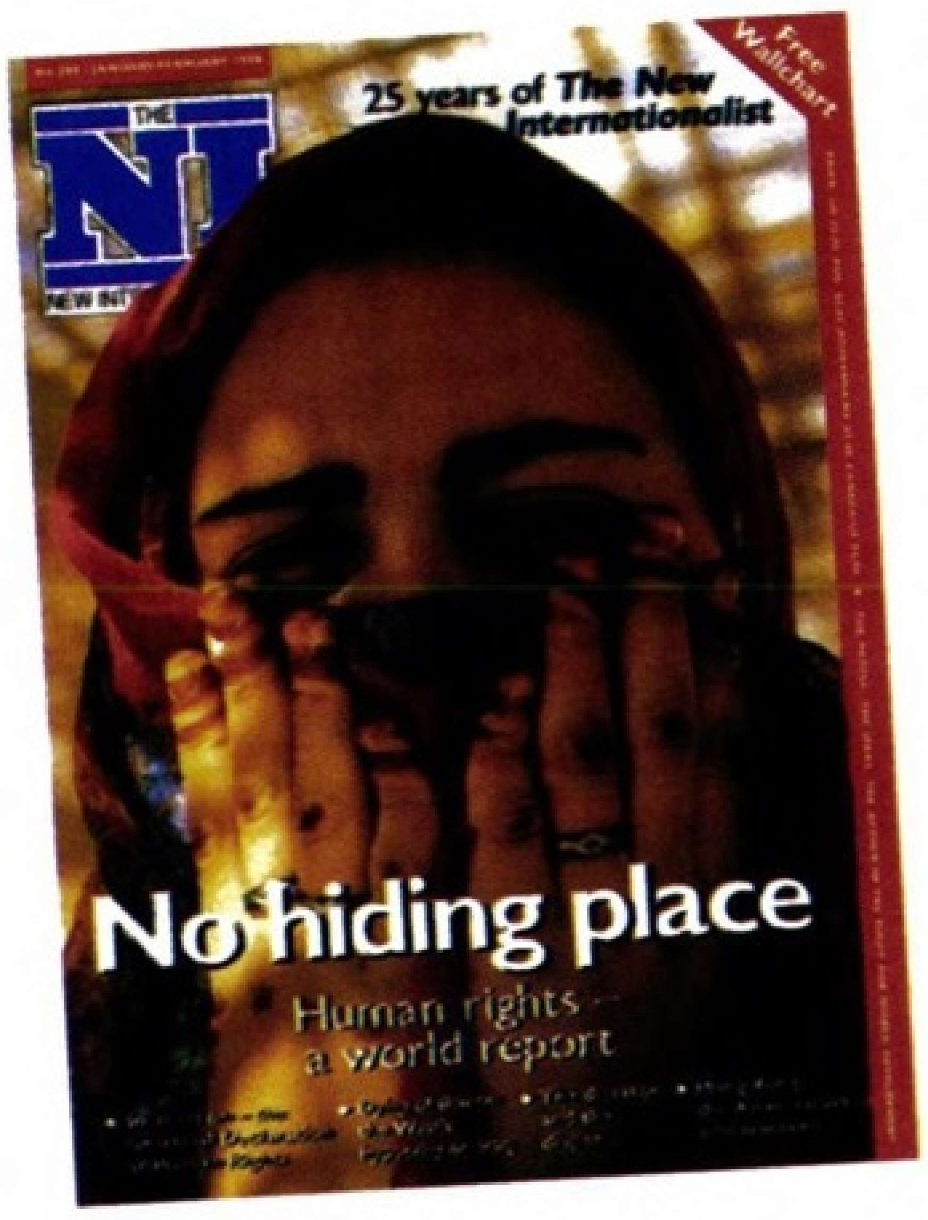
Vanessa Baird
*for the **New Internationalist** Co-operative*

Letters

The New Internationalist welcomes your letters. But please keep them short. They may be edited for purposes of space or clarity. Include a home telephone number if possible and send your letters to the nearest editorial office. The address and e-mail are inside the front cover.

Human responsibilities

On reading your issue on ***Human Rights*** (**NI 298**) I found myself amazed that so little focus was placed on human responsibilities. We seem to find it easier to talk about human rights but people have expressed to me their discomfort around responsibilities because they see them as impinging on their rights. It seems we want rights for ourselves and others, but how much are we prepared to question our lifestyle to take responsibility for our choices so that human rights may exist? We hear so much talk about sustainable development yet the only possible foundation for rights to develop and be sustainable is through people accepting their responsibilities.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25 years of The New Internationalist
Free Wallchart
No hiding place
Human rights – a world report

I am promoting a Declaration of Human Responsibilities which can be found on my website: http://www.hartcentre.demon.co.uk

Richard Bryant-Jeffries
Guildford, England

Iraqi co-operation

A very big thank you to Felicity Arbuthnot for her article on Iraq ('Dying of Shame' **NI 298**). My husband visited his relatives in Baghdad in 1995 and again in 1997 and can confirm the truth of what she reports.

The attempted genocide of the Iraqi nation will hardly gain the respect and co-operation of its people. On the contrary, they will be all the more ready to support Saddam Hussein and join in his hatred of the US and UK, as can be plainly seen.

What have financially ruined, malnourished civilians got to do with hidden biological weapons? Why should they be denied basic human rights? There is surely no reason why sanctions cannot be lifted at the same time that weapons inspections continue, or indeed why the inspections teams could not contain more non-US members?

Then maybe the Iraqis would be more willing to co-operate.

Dr Gwendolen Al Wakeel
Bristol, England

Against sanctions

Thank you for printing Felicity Arbuthnot's article 'Dying of Shame' (**NI 298**). Your contacts box contained only details of US-based campaigns against sanctions. I am writing to inform readers that there is also a UK-based campaign, run by students at Cambridge University. Our aims are to raise awareness of the effects of the sanctions and to campaign within the UK for them to be lifted on humanitarian grounds. Contact the Campaign Against Sanctions on Iraq (CASI), c/o Sebastian Wills, Clare College, Cambridge CB2 1TL. e-mail: saw27@cam.ac.uk Website: http://linux.clare.cam.ac.uk/~saw27/casi/

Sebastian Wills
Cambridge, England

Cruel tyrant

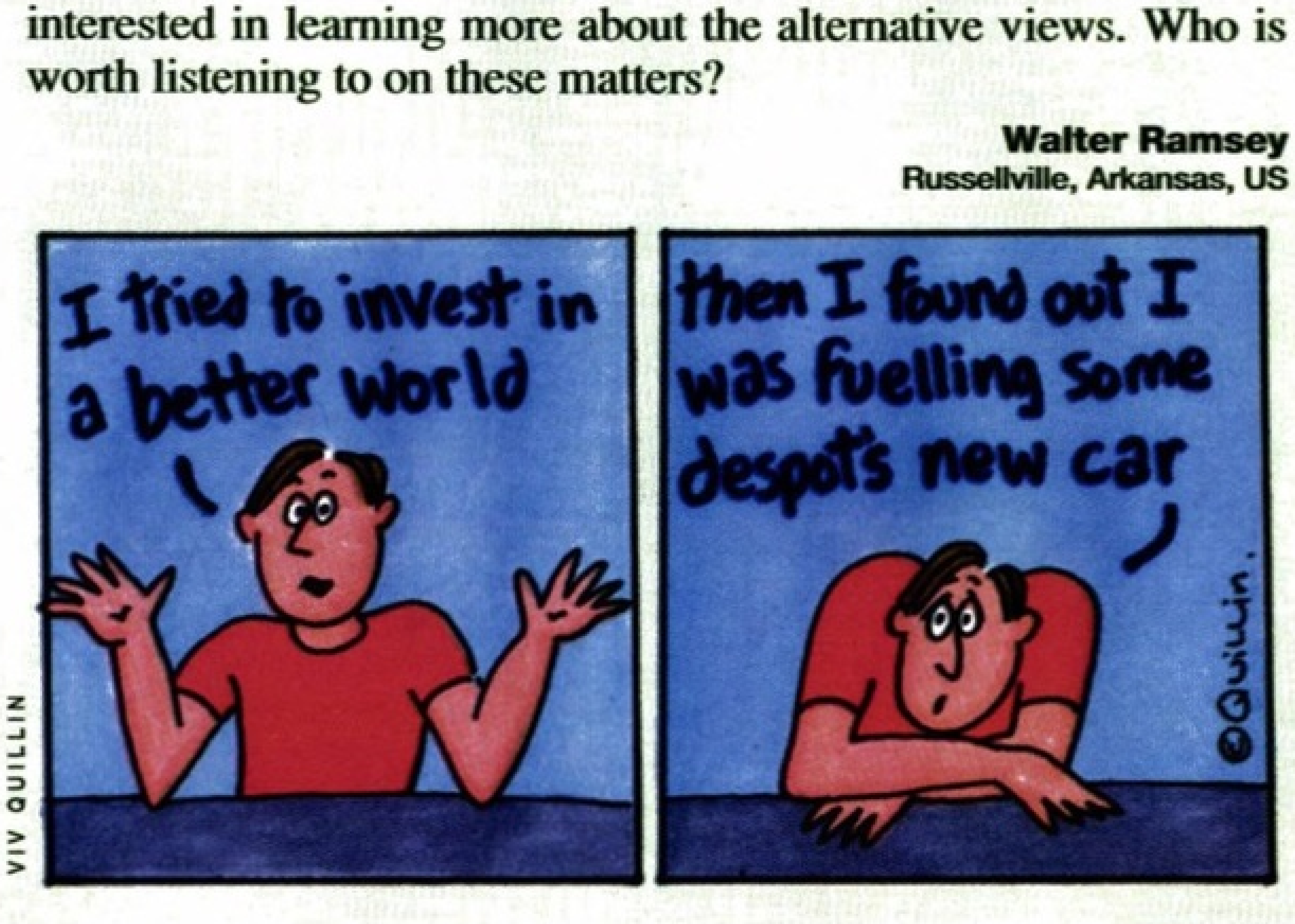
I was angered while reading your article on Iraq, 'Dying of Shame' (**NI 298**) not because of the suffering of the children – this had already made me cry many times over – but because of how biased against the West your writer is. As far as I know: 1) Saddam Hussein never complied with the UN resolutions; 2) by preferring to hide and keep producing his nasty weapons Saddam Hussein has deprived his country of hundreds of billions of dollars in lost oil revenues; 3) nevertheless, the embargo has been partly suspended to allow Iraq to buy just enough food and medicines. Mr Hussein is a cynical and cruel tyrant who is letting his children suffer and die only to tear apart the heart of the population of the West. Sure enough the Americans are no angels when they insist on enforcing UN resolutions in the case of Iraq but not in the case of Israel. But the world should not hesitate one second in choosing between the two camps, Iraq and the US.

Emmanuelle Moors de Giorgio
Rome, Italy

Stunned

After reading David Ransom's article (***Globalization* NI 296**) I was stunned. As part of the American flock (perhaps of ostriches), I saw all of the cheap imports in the marketplace and thought 'World market good!' And somehow I rationalized that the cheap labor in other parts of the world gained also because they now were at least making some kind of wage vs. maybe no wage. But, then there is this feeling that most Americans keep hidden: that somehow our precious capitalism is out of control. We hear about the World Bank and the IMF and the financial coups of the transnationals but we feel so far removed from all of this. We are torn between a feeling that economically something is very wrong and our inbred capitalist loyalties that tell us that we need to be in on all this money-making. We're trying to figure out which company to buy stock in when we should be looking at a much broader picture. Having said all this, I would interested in learning more about the alternative views. Who is worth listening to on these matters?

Walter Ramsey
Russellville, Arkansas, US


I tried to invest in a better world
then I found out I was fuelling some despot's new car
VIV QUILLIN
©Quillin

Strong people

Your issue on Western Sahara (**NI 297**) portrays the Sahrawis as they truly are – strong, intelligent, dedicated people whose independence is long overdue. I usually find myself writing letters to editors after they have published an extremely one-sided Moroccan-influenced article. This is the first time I can write to a magazine praising the coverage of the Western Saharan situation. You created a thorough foundation for people to learn more about this issue so that they can remember and take action on behalf of the Sahrawis.

Shelley Wagner Beirouk
Fallston, US

Left-wing colonialism

An otherwise excellent December issue (***Desert dawn*, NI 297**) is spoiled by the re-emergence of left-wing colonialism. John McSweeney (*Letters*) writes that the need for an alternative viewpoint to capitalism is 'greater than ever'. The only justification for this statement is that the capitalist system in now accepted by the vast majority of nations. Judging by the privatization success of most countries it is also more popular than ever.

Left-wing intellectuals lecturing developing nations from the comfort of their armchairs are one reason why so many are still struggling to embrace the free market. Capitalism is not perfect but it's the best system we have. Even the oppressed Saharawi people recognize this.

Ian Lewis
New Brighton, England

Small world syndrome

I have every sympathy with the issues raised by your edition on ***Globalization*** (**NI 296**). However, my sympathy stopped with the baffling article 'Homeworld' by Trevor Turner.

I have worked with mentally ill people and their families in deprived inner-city areas for many years. The depressing experiences that Dr Turner relates to globalization are far more likely to be the result of ignorance bred into incestuous communities whose minds are closed. A touch of globalization and diversification of culture might help to increase tolerance levels, thereby alleviating, not creating, mental-health problems.

Organizations such as Amnesty International and Oxfam rely on international networking through a form of social globalization to meet their objectives. The Small World Syndrome, not globalization, is I suggest at the root of the mental-health problems described by Dr Turner. Diluting cultures and not concentrating them is more likely to alleviate the problem.

Jane McInnes
Glasgow, Scotland

Brandon Astor-Jones, a prisoner on Death Row in the US, has regularly written for the **NI**. He has just written to **NI** readers thanking them for their support and asking them to ensure that they write his full name and address: Mr Brandon Astor-Jones EF 122216, G3-77 Georgia Diagnostic and Classification Prison, Post Office Box 3877, Jackson, Georgia, 30233, US. You should also put your own full name and address or the letter will not get passed on to Brandon.

The views expressed on the letters page are not necessarily those of the New Internationalist.

LETTER FROM COLOMBIA

Killing connections

Jenny James mourns the death of a friend and ponders the paradoxes of Colombian 'justice'.

Luis Arenas was a retired police official and a supporter of the Colombian Conservative Party. He read of our ecological community in the Conservative daily newspaper *El Tiempo* (*The Times*) and wrote to us of his own environmental efforts down in the flat, hot country of Caquetá – Port Milán on the River Orteguaza.

I made the journey at the beginning of 1995. Luis was 62 and the sort of person who made you mind ever so much whether he approved of you; his wife Dolly was plump, warm-hearted and soon became my friend. I had long, deep conversations with Luis about the social and environmental situation and local political opposition to his work. I was moved by the depth of his caring; saddened and depressed so see how alone he was in his efforts and determined to work with him in any way that I could.

Several months, river journeys and letters later, I received a note to collect a registered letter from Neiva post office, a day's journey away.

I collapsed on the post-office floor: 'Luis has been assassinated,' wrote Dolly. 'A hired killer slaughtered him with 19 machine-gun bullets. Please come and see me. I am living in Florencia: it is not safe to go to Milán.'

I got out of the taxi and fell into Dolly's arms. 'Who was it? The *narcos*?' Luis had been fighting for the substitution of the coca crop, ubiquitous in this region.

'No, no.'

'The guerrillas?'

'No, of course not.'

'*Who* then?'

'The *Alcalde* (Mayor) of Milán.'

Luis' political rival: Luis' popularity had been rising rapidly because of his efficient, honest communal and environmental work; he would undoubtedly have become Mayor in the next elections. Does Colombia know no other way of arguing?

I knew privately that I would go to the guerrillas once I got home. They are the only people who do anything about anything and they take their time about it. But Luis' family were hugely bourgeois, university lecturers, lawyers, highly placed social workers; I couldn't talk about that side of Colombian reality with them. Yet when I suggested going to the Security Police, they had a fit. They definitely wanted me to do something, and kept looking at me intently as if I should know what they meant. I didn't.

I don't know how my mono-linear European brain finally caught on. When I at last came out with it, they all heaved a huge sigh of relief and became immensely enthusiastic: they wanted me to go to the guerrillas. I felt like a five-year-old, struggling to learn to read.

I had never met the Mayor, though one day in Milán Luis had taken me to see him, only to find that he was out. So, just in case all my informants were wrong and he was innocent, I did my own test. I sent him two poems, one 'To Luis Arenas' promising to carry on his green work; the other 'To Luis' Assassins' ending with the line 'Luis is at rest now. And you, little people, are you sleeping peacefully?'

I heard some time later that the Mayor was telling everyone he was 'receiving death threats from Neiva'.

Months passed. Fear paralysed Luis' family from taking further action. One day, 'chance' took me into Neiva, the nearest town. Passing a newspaper stand, I saw the headline: 'Mayor of Milán accused of murder of Governor.'

He's done it again, murdered someone else. I ran to the newspaper headquarters, breathlessly told my story in all its details. They dialled the number of Luis' family.

'Will you give me permission to speak now?' I asked them. 'Yes,' came the reply.

The newspaper director drove me to the Public Prosecutor where I recorded everything I knew on tape.

'This will help to keep him in jail,' they told me.

I left the office, quietly saying my last goodbye to Luis.

Today, one memory nags me. I remember telling Luis the story of a young American traveller who had been machine-gunned to death in the nearby coca town of Getuchá.

'But he was a *vicioso* [an addict],' Luis had said. 'You must understand that this is the people's way of cleansing society.'

SARAH JOHN

Jenny James has lived and worked in the Colombian rainforest since 1987.

Update

NUCLEAR WASTE

Dumped

Reactors in Russian Pacific fleet threaten lives

HEIDI BRADNER / PANOS PICTURES

Soldiers relax in Vladivostock, where the equivalent of 50 Chernobyls is waiting to happen.

PEOPLE die young in Bolshoi Kamen, a city facing Vladivostock on Russia's Pacific coast. At the local cemetery overlooking the sea, gravestones show that most people died in their thirties and forties.

Bolshoi Kamen is a company town. Its business is cleaning the reactors of nuclear submarines – a life-threatening occupation. The workers at the Svezda factory, who were once responsible for maintaining submarines, deactivate them. They remain present during reactor clean-ups, whereas they used to be evacuated when the radioactive fuel tanks were emptied. In the past they were exposed to seven minutes of x-rays a day – now they receive a dose of 12 hours.

'We are heading straight toward an ecological disaster,' says Professor Boris Preobrazhensky, laboratory director at the Institute of Geology of the Pacific in Vladivostock, about the decaying Russian Pacific fleet. Twenty per cent of warships are already beyond repair. Around 50 vessels have been retired in recent years – a third were deactivated and their nuclear reactors stored 'temporarily' in the ocean. The rest are waiting in ports with radioactive fluid still on board. If enough money can be scraped together they should be deactivated by 2010. Admiral Valery Danelin says: 'For the time being, we can still consider them safe, but rust is eating away at them. Nuclear particles may infiltrate the water and disseminate. The problem must be resolved and soon.'

Most experts consider every one of these submarines a Chernobyl waiting to happen. The Pacific Fleet has already been involved in 11 serious accidents: six reactor explosions, four shipwrecks and one major collision.

At Vladivostock Bay young soldiers throw thousands of tons of bombs, projectiles and munitions off their dilapidated warships and into the sea. The weapons' detonators have supposedly been removed, but not the explosives.

Around 800 tons of waste is known to have been dumped into the sea. Tokyo has protested to the Russian Government, who say the waste is handled safely, but many believe offloading radioactive waste from nuclear submarines continues. In Bolshoi Kamen all requests for investigation into the cause of the town's mysterious deaths have gone unanswered. The submarines provide scarce salaries for locals, but Olga Skripko, leader of the factory's union, is angry at their treatment: 'The workers are hungry. All year long they live on crumbs of bread and bits of potato... Our children are nothing but skin and bones. We haven't seen anything like this since the camps.' ■

Manon Loizeau/*Le Nouvel Observateur*.

Species sell-out

STILL PICTURES

Medicines containing body parts from endangered tigers, rhinos and leopards are widely available across North America. A survey of 110 stores in New York, Vancouver, Seattle, Toronto, San Francisco, Atlanta and Los Angeles found that half of them sold medicines containing or claiming to contain ingredients from illegally-traded species. Almost all the medicines were made in China.

US customs must prove that products contain endangered species, even if they are labelled as such, before impounding them. Forensic techniques cannot detect derivatives such as ground tiger bone, so there have been few prosecutions. Campaigners demand the US and Canada make it illegal to claim that a product contains parts of endangered species. This is already the law in Britain and China.

New Scientist No 2119

Resisting 'the Globalizers of Misery'

As the top 1,000 transnational corporations met at Davos in Switzerland to set priorities for the next century, campaigners released the 'Declaration Against the Globalizers of Misery'. The statement denounces the international corporate meeting and 'the accelerating centralization of political and economic power caused by globalization, and its gradual shift to unaccountable and undemocratic institutions, such as the World Trade Organization'. Academics, authors, journalists and a coalition of 192 organizations from 54 countries have supported the Declaration, which states that globalization 'only benefits multinational business élites, while increasing numbers of people are going hungry, unable to afford basic healthcare and education, and forced to cope with environmental destruction.'

For more information about 'Peoples' Global Action Against "Free" Trade and the World Trade Organisation' (PGA): e-mail: playfair@asta.rwth-aachen.de Fax: +34 8 524 1121.

ROLAND SEITRE / STILL PICTURES

Safe at last

Antarctica will be safe from mining and oil exploration for 50 years after an environmental pact has finally become international law. All 26 member nations of the Antarctic Treaty have ratified the Madrid Protocol. The signing was delayed for five years due to opposition to the mining ban by the US and Japan. The pact also sets strict environmental standards for researchers, who must take all their waste with them when they leave the continent.

New Scientist No 2118

CHILD LABOUR

Stamping it out

Asian youth kick off global protest

Starting the march in Manila and heading for Geneva with protestors from 80 countries.

CHRISTIAN AID / J MATTHEWS / NETWORK

CHILDREN from all over South East Asia have raised their voices and their feet to demand action to stop exploitative labour. The first leg of the Global March Against Child Labour began in January in Manila with youth marching, dancing and simulating what it was like to work in areas such as domestic work, mining and agriculture. They soon attracted local attention. Taxi drivers gave marchers free rides into town and after the march through Manila, police rescued 14 girls from prostitution in a local night club. One of the officers who helped the girls said: 'We are highly motivated by the Global March and wanted to express our solidarity in action.' Some politicians raised the issue in parliament and a conference of marchers, academics and politicians discussed the conditions of child labour in South East Asia.

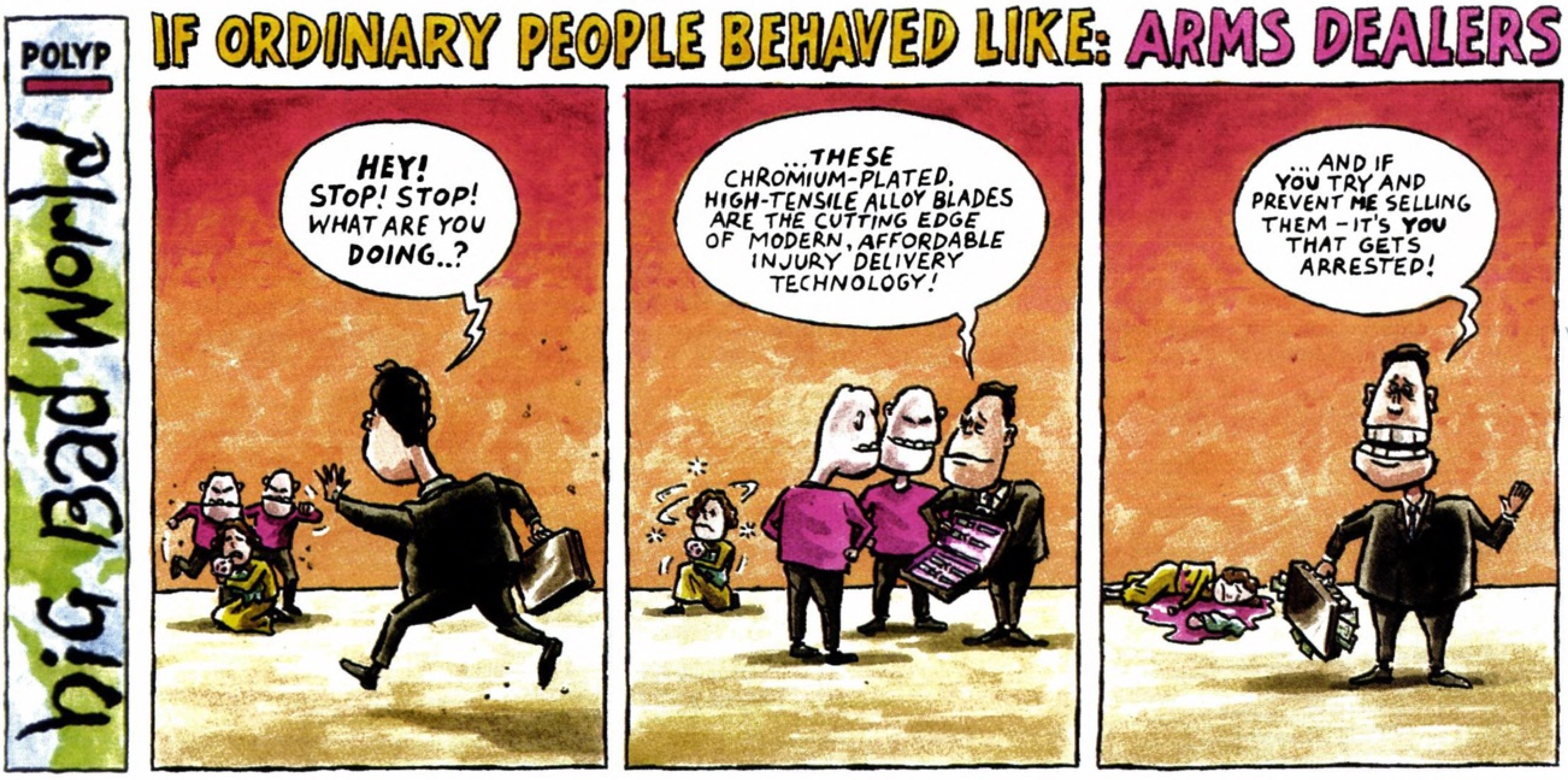
Over six months youth and adults from 80 countries will march across Asia, Europe, Africa, Latin America and the US to converge on the Geneva office of the International Labour Organization (ILO). When they arrive on 1 June they will call for national and international action as the ILO discusses a convention to stamp out child exploitation. 'There could be thousands of children linking hands around the ILO building – it will be a very powerful thing,' says British trade-union representative Des Farrell.

Labour unions, activist organizations and the children themselves have supported the march to draw attention to labour and poverty. Organizer Eileen Maybin from Christian Aid says: 'Adult unemployment and child labour make a vicious circle. Often children who work end up unskilled and in poor health in adulthood. So they are unemployed and have to send their own kids to work.'

The marchers will also urge governments and international organizations to put more resources into education and promoting positive action by employers and consumers. International Co-ordinator of the Global March, Kailash Salyarthi, says: 'When I see the tremendous support the Global March has received, it becomes certain that the twenty-first century is not going to flourish at the cost of the sweat and blood of children.'

The young marchers in Manila expressed excitement at meeting other child labourers. Ex-domestic worker, Joan, says: 'We have been silent for so long, neglected by society. I am joining the march because I want to help in making our voices finally heard.' ■

Andrew Bibby *The Observer*/Global March Against Child Labour
For more information and contacts: www.globalmarch.org/

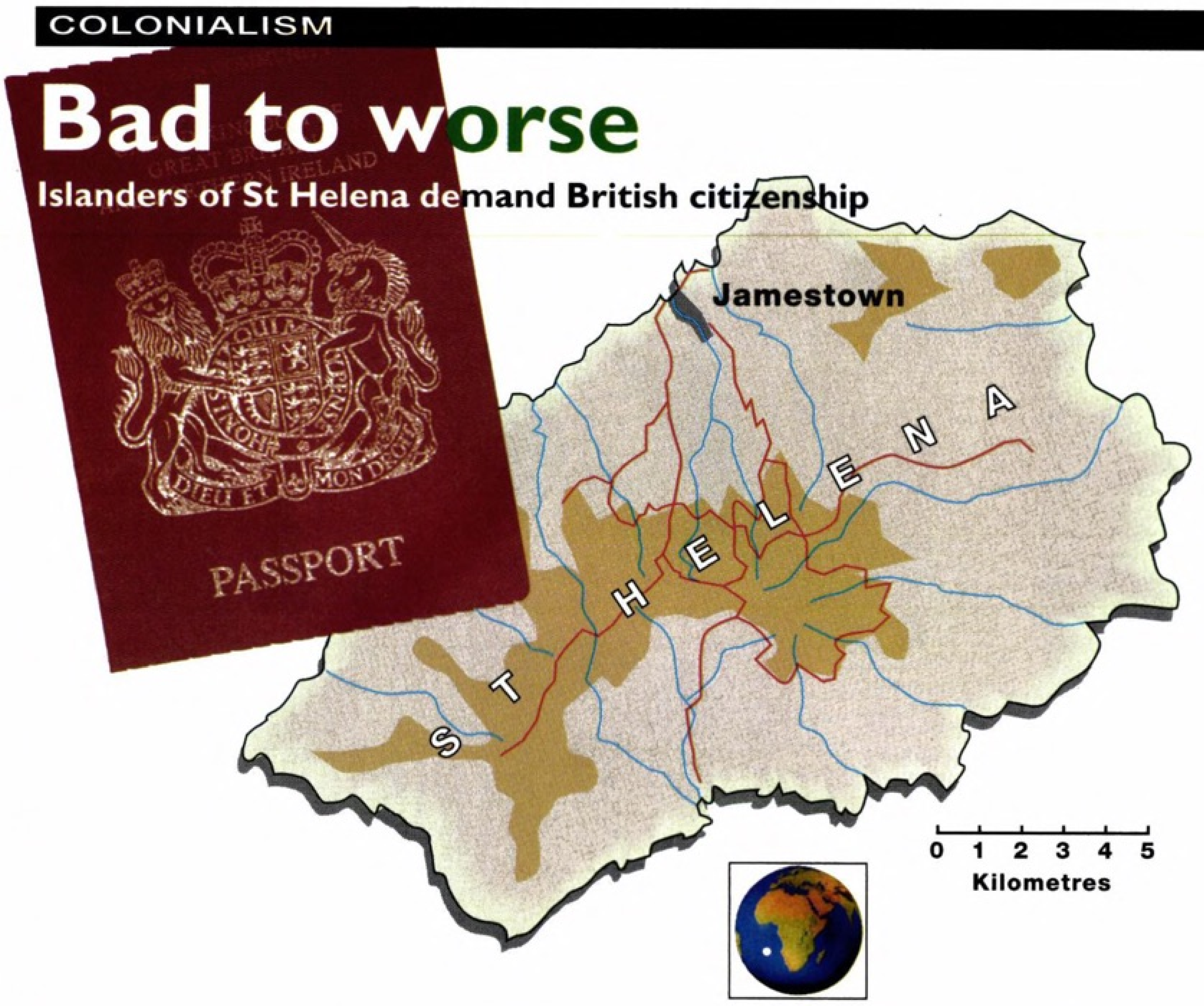

POLYP
big Bad World
IF ORDINARY PEOPLE BEHAVED LIKE: ARMS DEALERS
HEY! STOP! STOP! WHAT ARE YOU DOING..?
...THESE CHROMIUM-PLATED, HIGH-TENSILE ALLOY BLADES ARE THE CUTTING EDGE OF MODERN, AFFORDABLE INJURY DELIVERY TECHNOLOGY!
...AND IF YOU TRY AND PREVENT ME SELLING THEM – IT'S YOU THAT GETS ARRESTED!

Update

COLONIALISM

Bad to worse

Islanders of St Helena demand British citizenship



THE islanders of St Helena, a British island territory off the coast of Africa, have a phrase for the string of British Governors who have ruled them: 'The bad go, worse come.' And now they seek a change for the better.

The key issue for the 5,800 islanders is British citizenship, which they claim was given to them in a royal charter dating from 1673. The British Government until now has preferred to classify them as 'subjects' denying them the right to employment or residence in Britain.

Councillor Dale Bowers recently took his first trip off the island to ask the British Parliament for citizenship rights. 'There's a fear of being left to be prisoners on our own island,' he says.

One of the furthest outposts of Britain's empire, St Helena is nearly 2,000 kilometres – a five-day sail – from the African mainland. The island has no airport and is dependent on the few ships that call there for its food supply. Unemployment is high and the budget allows for only two students per year to go abroad to university.

Councillors hope the island will be made a Crown Dependency giving them greater control over local affairs and the annual aid budget. This would also allow islanders to study and work in Britain and bring skills and remittances to the island. Locals also want to introduce an Internet lottery to compensate for the 40-per-cent drop in British aid to the island over the last decade. Councillor Terry Richards says: 'We need the lottery money so we can say to Britain: "We don't need your aid anymore." The island will be self-sufficient.'

The calls for change are amplified by dissatisfaction with Governor Smallman after unemployment benefits were cut and a mob rioted in the capital of Jamestown last year. The Governor has been nicknamed 'His Absency' and locals feel he has little concern for the island's future.

Recently the British Government gave 30 St Helenians three-year work permits. The rest of the islanders await the outcome of a Government debate about its policy towards Britain's 14 dependent territories to determine their status and rights. The British need to change their governance from poor to better, according to Councillor Eric George: 'We just want a greater say in our destiny.' ■

Alan Martin/*Gemini News Service*

Bingo losses

A bingo hall has come under fire for changing its name to 'Mecca' in Luton, UK. 'Linking the heart of Islam with gambling and alcohol is blasphemy,' said Akbar Dad Khan, the secretary of Luton Islamic Society. The hall is owned by a chain of Mecca Bingo Clubs. If it agrees to drop the name in Luton it may come under pressure to do so for its 134 other bingo halls. This local controversy follows international criticism of shoe companies Nike and Clarks for using Islamic and Hindu symbols and names on footwear.

Murali Krishnan/*Gemini News Service*

Award for work with holy trees

Prachak Pethsing, a former Buddhist monk from Thailand who ordained trees to save them from the axe, has been honoured for his environmental work. Prachak worked with locals to preserve the Dong Yai forest which was threatened by plans to introduce eucalyptus mono-cropping. He set up community forest patrols and ordained trees. This angered local officials and Prachak was forced to leave the monkhood when he was charged with trespassing, forest encroachment and disruption of the public peace. He has now received an annual award from Sarvodaya, one of the world's biggest Buddhist organizations.

The Ecologist Vol 28 No 1

KITTPREMPOOL-UNEP / STILL PICTURES

Thai monks save their forest.

Sins of the parents

In Chinese towns, criminals are rarely forgiven and their children are not allowed to forget the crimes of their parents. 'People believe that crime is in the blood, and that the children will turn out like their parents,' explains Zhang Shuquin of the Shaanxi Province Social Reintegration Society.

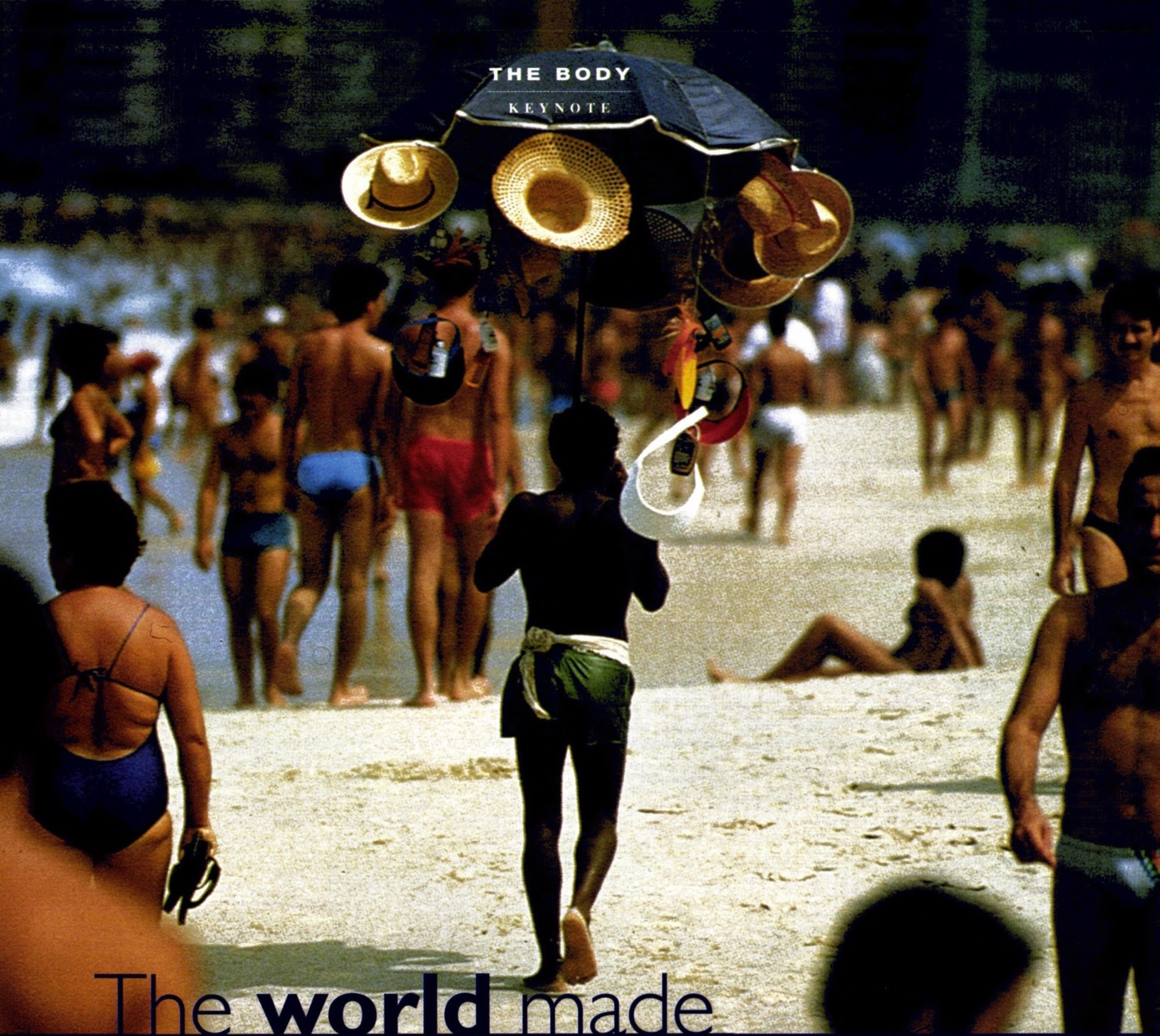
Sometimes the children's parents have been convicted for domestic murders or denounced then executed. The children of the marriage are disgraced and drift to the cities to live on the streets. As a former journalist, Zhang is keen to use publicity to break down social barriers. 'They are innocent,' says Zhang. 'We just want people to understand that.'

Nick Young/*Gemini News Service*

Quote

'Self-censorship is like celibacy: nobody can tell whether you actually practice it.'

Tsang Tak-sing, Chief Editor of Ta Kung Pao on claims that local papers are playing down negative news about the Chinese Government.



REX FEATURES

The **world** made flesh

Bodies. Human bodies. We love them. We need them. But examine the body, and you will see a lot more besides, argues **Vanessa Baird**.

Along the white corridors are garish, coloured illustrations showing parts of the body I hardly knew existed, let alone cared about.

They take on particular significance now, some organs and their functions especially so.

We make our way, down one floor, to the operating theatre. Above its twin doors are strict instructions not to enter. A few yards away, opposite the doors, are a couple of tables with blue covered chairs. Here we sit and wait.

Not for the first time am I aware of a horrible congruence. I was in the early stages of putting together this issue of the **NI** on the theme of 'the body' and had just finished commissioning the main articles, when there was a phone-call saying that a close relative has been taken quite unexpectedly, seriously, ill.

He is now behind those swing doors, fighting for his life.

Strangely, during these hours, while his actual body is undergoing a massive medical assault, it's not his body that fills my consciousness. Maybe because it doesn't bear thinking about. But I don't think this is the only reason.

As I gaze out of the window, up to the dark, ragged fringes of fir trees on the snow-clad mountains, I think not of his body but of his love for snow. And as I watch the birds darting and weaving between the eves, their lives and gestures so vital yet vulnerable, it's his vitality, his spirit that fills my mind.

After ten hours in the operating theatre the surgeon comes out. The operation was very tricky, but it's worked. The patient has age and strength on his side.

The next day we visit him. The first thing he does, in between all the tubes, and without a moment's hesitation, is to beckon and kiss us each in turn.

And it's perfect. The simplest, most direct way of expressing all the love, fear, relief, hope, gratitude. Bodily communicating what desperately needs to be said, but would take volumes to say in words.

Body politics

Returning to Oxford I find, on my desk, the piles of books I'd started reading on 'the body'. It's a trendy, 'hip' area of study these days. Much of the work is being done not by biologists but by philosophers, psychoanalysts and feminist theorists, drawing inspiration from French thinkers such as Hélène Cixous, Jacques Lacan, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida or Luce Irigaray. Debates on the 'materiality' versus the 'discursivity' of the body abound. And a lot of it is frankly impenetrable to the general reader.

I flick open one of the less jargon-bound collections and read: 'The body of woman is the site where culture manufactures the blockade of woman.' My mind quietly boggles at the prospect. Another text offers: 'Poststructuralist discourse analysis engages with the extra discursive of social reality (social practices, institutions etc) and of *corpo-real* bodies (their physical beings)...' Well, there you are.

I find it hard to relate these writings either to the feelings aroused by the personal experience of the body of a loved one at risk or to the subjects that lie at the heart of the *New Internationalist*'s concerns. Issues like the right to the basic, vital things your body needs to survive: food, water, shelter, access to healthcare. The right not to have your body violated by others, be they oppressive regimes, employers or those with most clout within your family or community.

But there is a connection. These texts may not dwell on what bodies need, but they do examine what bodies 'mean'. And what bodies 'mean' in a particular culture or society actually plays a crucial role in determining who can have what they need in their lives and who can't.

More explicitly, inequalities in the world are established and maintained by the 'meaning' that we give different bodies.

It's often extremely crude. For example, in many parts of the world, if you are born with a female body you are automatically denied control over your own life. You are the possession of your father or your brothers or your uncles until you become that of your husband and later your sons. Inferiority is 'read' into your body at birth. Your very chances of survival may be affected. In Bangladesh girls have a 70-percent higher mortality rate than boys for the simple reasons that they are fed less and are less likely than their brothers to be taken to a health clinic if ill.[1]

Gender is not the only issue. Not so long ago – before 1994 to be precise – if you were one of the 30 million South Africans with a black-skinned body you had to live in designated areas and were not even allowed to vote in elections in your own country.

The stamping of inequality on our bodies occurs in an infinite variety of ways. If you are disabled you generally do not have the same rights to a job or to mainstream education as an able-bodied person. In many countries – Romania springs to mind – you are likely to be incarcerated in an institution at birth.

Body prejudice also comes in more subtle guises. It may be focused on what you actually do with your body. If you come from a class background in which it is usual to sell your bodily or manual skills rather than your cerebral abilities then the chances are you will receive lower wages and be less valued for the work you do. Unless, that is, you happen to enjoy the elevated status of a sports celebrity or supermodel.

Finally, your chances in life can be determined by whether your body conforms to your society's ideals of beauty. This has been particularly true for women. Without political or economic power, a woman is entirely dependent on male patronage and thus male ideas of how she should behave and appear. Typically, this is internalized by women and becomes an obsessive concern with physical appearance. It's not just a case of 'you are your body', but 'you are what your body looks like'. If you have any doubts about the continued power and prevalence of this, consult any magazine rack.

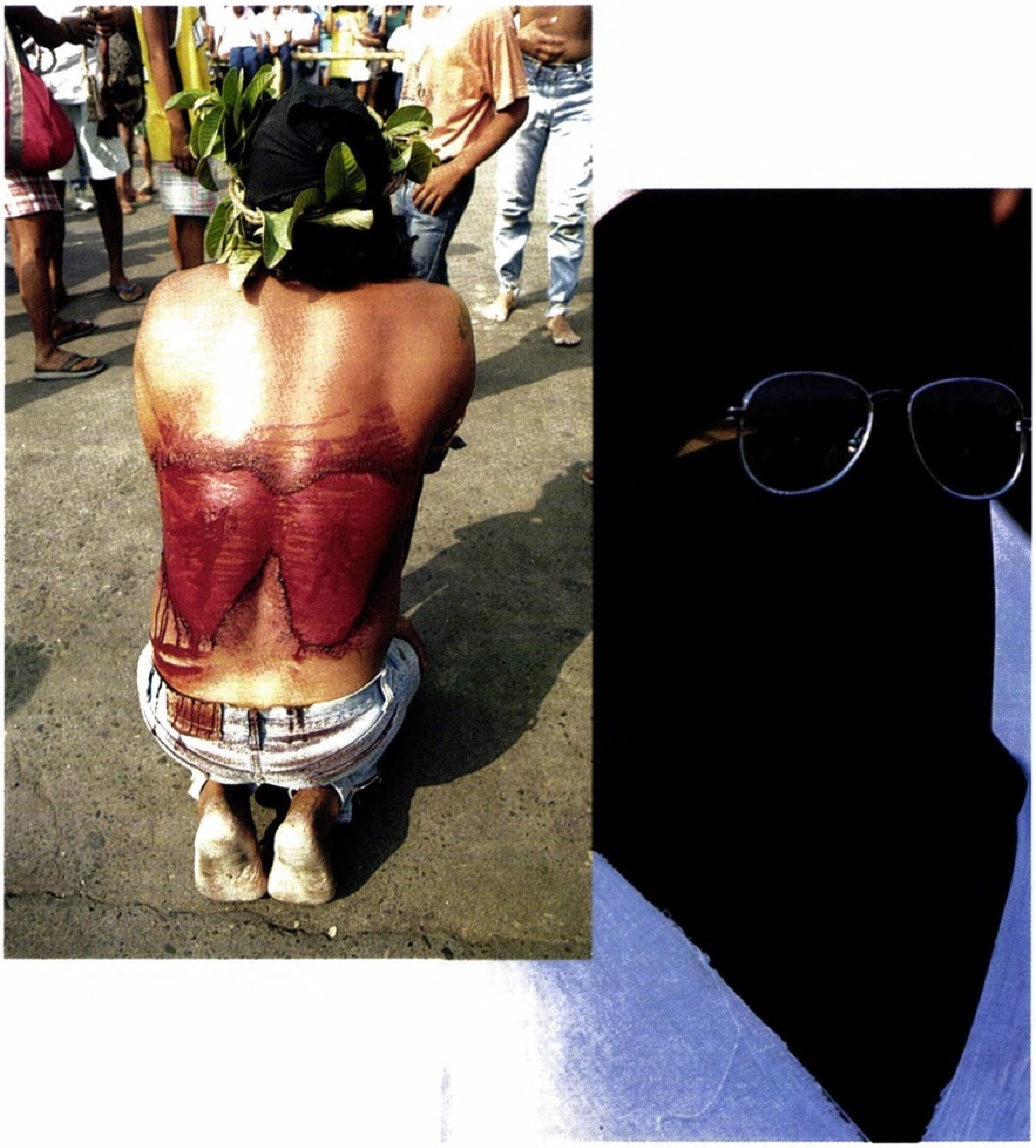
If we look at the body, we can see the world. If we look at how different bodies – black, white, male, female, rich, poor – are viewed, and what kind of privileges or privations that accrue to them, then we see a picture of the world of human, social and economic relationships. In this sense the body is 'the world made flesh'.

Skinny things and nipple rings

And look at bodies we do. For we are fascinated by them. Although most major

The quiet intricacies of physical intimacy in a park in Vietnam.

JIM HOLMES / PANOS



Bodies of sin: Christian zealots (left) flagellate themselves to piety in the Philippines, while Islamic fundamentalism requires a total cover-up for women in Iran (right).

SEAN SUTTON / MAG
REX FEATURES

religions in the world maintain that our temporal bodies are not the most important thing in life and it's our eternal souls that really count, body-consciousness rules supreme.

It makes sense in a way. Our bodies are our prime source of pleasure and pain, our first point of contact with the world. What would our lives in the world be without our bodies? They are a source of delight. Cultures and religions that have tried to deny the flesh have almost always lapsed into hypocrisy. Such regimes – be they Catholic or Puritan – become obsessed with the flesh, especially female flesh. The women in Tehran or Kabul trying to navigate kerbs and potholes via the tiny permissible slits in their veils, are at the sharp end of such denials.

The joys of physicality may be simple, like feeling the air on your face as you step out on a Spring morning. The cold smoothness of a stone. The rugged bark of a tree. The exhilaration of water. The comfort of the bodies of loved ones. The intimacy of loving eroticism. The magic of sex.

The body is also an amazingly powerful medium for transmitting information and emotions between living creatures. Even when people are speaking to each other face-to-face, two-thirds of their communication is non-verbal body-language.[2]

But our fascination with the body far exceeds these simple functions and pleasures. It can also be a very potent zone of self expression, giving scope to tremendous creativity on the one hand, dreary uniformity on the other. It has led to extraordinary feats of dance and athletics, and dazzling displays of imagination when it comes to adornment.

International and popular culture bombards us non-stop with body consciousness. Beautiful bodies are used to sell almost anything. And there's a lot of money to be made in the products and services of the body business, be they the provision of fashionable 'energy' drinks or cosmetic surgery. As Jeremy Seabrook says in his article *Of human bondage* (see page 28) human bodies are the world's biggest cash crop. The body is both the means of industrial production and the market for its products.

What the body business most profitably taps into is our use of our bodies to identify ourselves. This need is fundamental and universal. Tribal markings are everywhere to be seen: in the etched cheeks of a Yoruba villager in Southern Nigeria and the pierced nipple of a gay teenager in a Liverpool night-club; in the pure-silk sari of the Bombay socialite and the designer tie of the Wall Street financier.

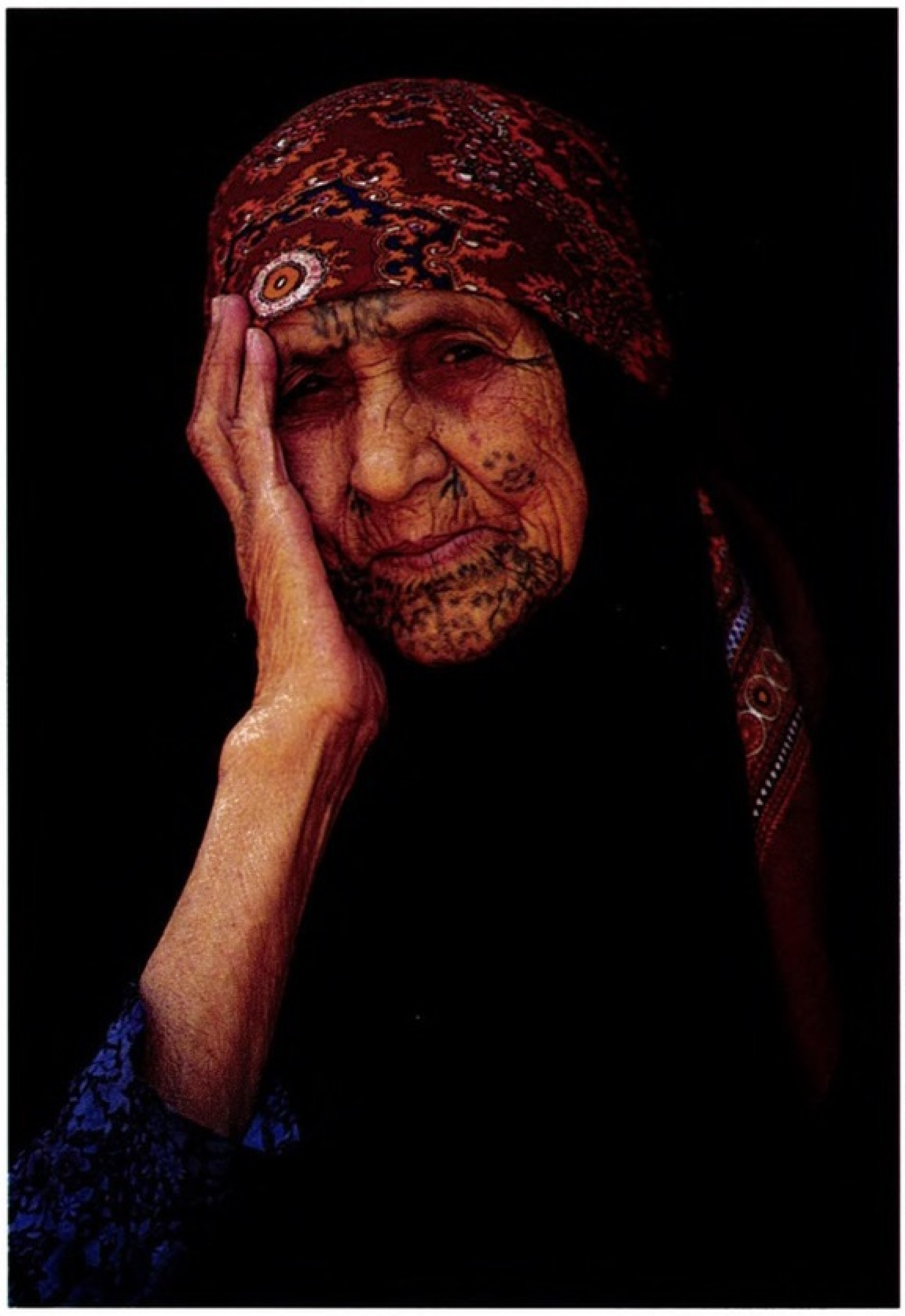
With the globalization of the world economy, and the aggressive marketing of 'cool' body images, the definitions of desirability and available identities seem to become increasingly narrow. The young and trendy wear Billabong cult clothing, be they in Brisbane or Bogotá. And traditional aesthetics are rapidly being replaced by a Westernized, globalized image.

Nowhere is this more painfully expressed than in the hyper-slender model for women, the 'Barbie-doll' look that has swept the world. Recently there have been reports of anorexia – previously thought to affect only white middle-class teenagers – among young black women in Southern Africa. 'In African culture beauty is traditionally associated with round bodies but as Western culture creeps into this society, so anorexia is affecting more and more Africans,' quotes Tsitso Rampuku, reporting from Lesotho, where there has been a spate of recent cases.

Across the border, in South Africa, it's a similar story. Malinda Motaung, a nurse working in Bloemfontein, says she has noticed a big increase in an illness that was unknown in her clinic five years ago. Mampho Mokhethe, mother of a 17-year-old anorectic, blames this on the way young urban women are bombarded with images of beautiful and successful women. 'And almost without fail, they are thin,' she says. 'The subtle message is: if you want to get ahead, you had better look like supermodel Naomi Campbell.'[3]

The young and trendy wear Billabong, be they in Brisbane or Bogotá

Anorexia has to do with more than fashion. It has to do with power. Although a few males are affected, it's mainly a female problem. For many young women, eating is the area in which they feel they can have real control. US academic Susan Bordo quotes Aimee Liu, an ex-anorectic recreating her mindset at the time of her illness: 'Energy, discipline, my own power will keep me going. I need nothing and no-one else... I will be master of my own body, if



MORRIS CARPENTER / PANOS

Experience – as well as culture – writes itself on the face of an elderly woman in Beirut.

nothing else, I vow.'

Like the flesh-denying ascetic, the anorectic's ability to live with minimal food makes her feel powerful and worthy of admiration in a world from which, at the most profound level, she feels excluded and unvalued.[4]

The terrible irony is that it is so self-defeating. As Bordo points out, the symptoms of anorexia isolate, weaken and undermine its sufferer, as she turns the life of the body into an all-absorbing fetish. In effect she capitulates to patriarchy's traditional demand that women limit themselves and live in a shrunken world.

Ultimately others – principally medical professionals – intervene, and take control.

The body in parts

Few encounters require that we willingly submit our bodies to a group of strangers, to examine, prod, poke, inject and even cut open. But that, in theory, is what we do when we cross the threshold into a doctor's surgery or a hospital. If you are in pain or in danger it's only natural to want someone to make you better, to magic the trouble away. You may feel so grateful to that person that you don't question too closely the magic they are using, or its premise. The power we hand over to our chosen healers is really quite astounding when you stop to think about it.

Until the 1970s the authority of orthodox Western medicine went virtually unchallenged. Although it borrows much of its terminology from the Classical Greeks, it does not use the same premise that mind, spirit and body are interconnected. Rather it uses the Cartesian notion that mind and body are quite separate entities and the body is but a kind of biological machine.

This mechanistic view has given birth to the stereotype of the consultant zooming in on an organ or a condition, ignoring the person it belongs to and then talking to colleagues about it in technical language the patient doesn't understand. This is not just the hackneyed stuff of comic movies. Although slowly changing, it's still the experience of many people around the world when they come into contact with the medical profession.

Medical anthropologist Nancy Scheper-Hughes reports that poor people in Brazil fear that health professionals will 'steal their organs' for transplant. This fear is in a sense realistic (see page 14), but it can also be seen as is a symbolic response to a medical approach that has scant regard for the integrity of the human being.

In the rich world, too, there is growing disenchantment with Western medical system that treats people as though their bodies were machines, with parts that may go wrong and need discrete and specific treatment.

This has fed the growth of 'holistic' approaches and alternative therapies. Most popular are acupuncture, homeopathy and osteopathy. More than one in three people in Britain has consulted an alternative health practitioner, and similar figures apply in Australasia, Canada and the US. Even the World Health Organization has criticized doctors for failing to accept acupuncture as a useful complementary medical technique.

Many argue that the boom in alternative medicine is giving patients choice and more power over their own bodies. This is debatable, as some alternative practitioners can be even more interventionist and paternalistic than orthodox doctors.[5]

But the idea that mind, body and spirit are interconnected, and that they have their own self-healing mechanisms, is gaining currency even in the most unexpected quarters.

I recall the surgeon who operated on my relative. He had said prior to the operation that during it he would be doing half the work, the patient would be doing the other half. And as I watched the birds and thought of the flow of his mind, body and spirit, this felt absolutely right.

One body, one world

We tend to think of the body as an entity with firm contours. In fact it is mainly fluid: two-thirds of it is water. If we thought of our bodies more in this way, I wonder what difference it would make. Would our thinking about our bodies be less hard and possessive? Would we think in terms of sharing an economy of vitality? Would we think differently about inner and outer, about self and other, about the boundary between your body and my body?

The word 'body' is not always personal and individualistic. It can also be used to describe a collection of people. It's long been recognized by ethicists that belonging to a 'social body' makes it possible to equate one's own good with that of another and thus to refrain from mutual injury, violence and exploitation. Why shouldn't the terms of reference be expanded to include the universal body, the international body of humanity?

Let's conclude with a little holistic exercise. The world is a body, your body. The top half of your body, the Northern part, say, gets all the goodness it needs to survive and more. In some parts it's actually quite bloated.

The bottom half, the Southern part, say, is in a state of perpetual struggle to get what it needs to survive. It has plenty of vitality, is capable of joy, but somehow it never gets quite enough goodness or nourishment in relation to the energy it expends just to stay alive.

In between the two, somewhere below your belly, is a belt. A very tight belt. It has to be that way, you are told, because your Northern body and your Southern body are different.

Not a very healthy state of affairs. Might it not be a good idea to loosen the belt a bit, let some of the goodness and nourishment flow around the whole body? Wouldn't Northern and Southern body benefit from this?

Your toes would probably agree. ■

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1 United Nations, *Women: Challenges to the Year 2000*, New York, 1991. **2** Alan Pease, *Body Language*, Sheldon Press, 1997. **3** Tsitso Rampuku, 'Health fears as slimming mania hits Africans', Gemini News Service, London, 1997. **4** Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and the Body*, University of California Press, 1993. **5** Dr Vernon Coleman, *Spiritpower*, European Medical Journal, Barnstaple, 1997.

Invitation

1
If my fat
was too much for me
I would have told you
I would have lost a stone
or two

I would have gone jogging
even when it was fogging
I would have weighed in
sitting the bathroom scale
with my tail tucked in

I would have dieted
more care a diabetic

But as it is
I'm feeling fine
feel no need
to change my lines
when I move I'm target light

Come up and see me sometime

2
Come up and see me sometime
Come up and see me sometime

My breasts are huge exciting
amnions of water melon
your hands can't cup
my thighs are twin seals
fat as slick pups
there's a purple cherry
below the blues
of my black seabelly
there's a mole that gets a ride
each time I shift the heritage
of my behind

Come up and see me sometime

From *Fat Black Woman's Poems* by Grace Nichols (Virago reprint 1994)

ILLUSTRATION BY VIV QUILLIN

My body

It's not always easy to claim your body as your own – especially if you are pregnant or disabled. **Micheline Mason** was both. But she forged a way.

My body was mine for only four days of my life. Although my body hurt for those four days, my head and heart were happy. I had a mummy, a daddy, a sister, a home, and I was loved unconditionally.

Unfortunately, my mother started worrying that something was wrong. She noticed that my crying seemed a bit too much, too desperate, and always louder when she picked me up or moved me from one place to another. She took me back to the hospital and asked them to have a look.

When she handed me over to the radiologist on that fourth day, she passed over more than she could ever have known. Once on the table the invisible X-rays defined my life forever – 'injured', 'brittle', 'congenital handicap', 'untreatable', 'probably fatal'. 'Leave her here with us,' they said. 'Prepare yourselves to lose her.'

I now no longer lived at home. I no longer had a mummy to cuddle or feed me, or even look at me. I had a label, a diagnosis, a 'genetic fault' a 'poor prognosis'. I had become hospital property along with my notes, removed from everything that could give my life meaning.

When my parents were given all this 'terrible' news, they did not have the arguments to put up a fight, so they did what they were told and went home without me. But before they left they smiled at me and this smile said all I needed to know. That they were not convinced that the doctors had got it right, and although they were going now, they would come back for me. Because of this I decided to live and eventually the hospital staff realized that they had been a bit hasty in their death threats. They handed me over to my parents to look after, almost like a foster child.

The words the medical profession used to describe my body, without a moment's reflection as to how they would destroy my sense of self, were 'deformed', 'abnormal', 'misshapen', 'severely handicapped', 'fragile', 'invalid'. No-one said 'pretty', 'attractive', 'unique', 'sensitive', 'warm', although I was also all those things, I realize now.

Once a medical photographer came to my bedside. I had combed my hair and put on my sweetest seven-year-old smile in preparation. When he put the screens around my bed and asked me to

take off my nightdress, I was dismayed. When he took close-ups of my arms, my legs, my back without once including my head, I was shocked beyond measure. He said they were going into a book for medical students. If he had asked me, I would have said no. I could not bear the thought of it. They would learn nothing about me from such pictures.

If you are disabled, the medical profession defines the parameters of your life, even the kind of education to which you are entitled. Because my body has a tiny difference in the gene which makes collagen, I spent the whole of my childhood imprisoned by medical reports which, in effect, allowed mainstream schools to discriminate against me. They said that I had to be educated 'otherwise' than in a school, because it was not fair to ask a school to take on the responsibility of such a 'fragile' child. Interestingly, the reason they gave *me* was that they had to protect me from the 'cruelty' of the other children in the school. As I had always found other children generally much kinder and more protective than most adults, I found this explanation pretty pathetic.

> ***'What! You are too small to have a baby' was the only real scare-mongering remark***

It seems so natural now that pregnant women are screened for 'abnormal' foetuses, that babies are born in hospitals, that doctors should have the power they do, that it is hard to imagine that this is a modern phenomena, only existing in highly developed, technologically obsessed, profit-orientated societies.

In Britain it was only after 1913 that doctors were given by the State the role of identifying and separating 'defectives' from the rest of the population. Several categories ranging from 'cretins' to 'moral defectives' were created. It was recommended that such people be separated from society, and from the opposite sex, otherwise we would 'out-breed' people who were normal and the whole of society would degenerate.

Children were not spared this 'vetting'. Parents were seen as a big problem because they often persisted in loving their disabled children. Hospital staff were trained to try and stop the 'bonding' before it began. They moved new-born disabled babies to separate nurseries and urged parents to 'leave them behind to be put into care'. 'Go home and have another baby' was the wisdom of the time.

The breaking of relationships between disabled and non-disabled people has been a national policy for nearly a century. Reclaiming myself from this legacy has been a difficult process. In some ways it was fortunate that the hospital made such a mistake in saying that I would probably die. We, as a family, learnt early on that 'experts' are fallible; that all future life is uncertain and open to the influence of individual or collective will. I began to believe that life could actually be all right. Perhaps more significantly, I began to believe that *I* was all right.

It was a long journey from being 'cut up' by a medical photographer to being confident enough to consider becoming a parent. Even now I am not sure that I would have made the decision from 'scratch'. In the event, the only decision I had to make was whether or not to continue with an accidental pregnancy. I had deliberately avoided asking for 'advice' from any medical person as to the wisdom or not of my becoming a mother. I knew all I would hear would be their fears and prejudices. I had found out, though, that any child I had would have a 50-per-cent chance of inheriting my condition and I'd spent several years working out what I thought about this. By the time I was faced with a real possibility I knew that a disabled child's life would have at least the same value as my own, and she or he therefore had every right to live it. I also thought I could protect a disabled child better than most from the oppression she or he would be bound to face. I was much more concerned about myself and my circumstances, including the fact that I would become a lone-parent – and of this I was truly afraid.

Yet I had often been afraid in my life – and I had never let it get the better of me. From the moment of decision, a protective mechanism seemed to enfold me. I surrounded myself with people who could and would be positive about this new life within me. I avoided the doubters and sceptics as much as possible. If I could not avoid them, because I was related to them, or they were my local doctor, I took a 'bodyguard' with me. I smiled at them all. I did not ask for reassurance from them, I just needed their skills, their co-operation. I told them that *they* must prepare for the possibility of a disabled baby; not to bother me with any form of 'screening'; and not to share their worries with me. I am sure that it was my presenting them all with a *fait-accompli* that enabled me to side-step the negative reaction which has been the experience of many of my disabled friends.

I am only one metre tall and I am not straight or symmetrical anywhere. In this light, it was amazing that 'What! You are too small to have a baby!' blurted out by my shocked local doctor, was the only really scare-mongering remark made in the whole nine months. Looking back, most of my memories are of people being excited in some quite profound way. It was as though I was defying their own demons, their own fears and self-imposed limits. Perhaps it was that 'oppressed' person within all of us seeing that we do not have to give in.

On my part a certain amount of bravado was involved. I was anxious about the birth and about the rest of our life together, especially when a late scan did confirm the fact that the baby had indeed inherited my condition of brittle bones. My tears and panics were kept for a very small group of friends who could listen to me without 'joining in'. In fact, I think I became a bit ruthless as the pregnancy progressed, pruning the list of acceptable visitors to rather a narrow selection. But I felt it was a necessary form of self-defence, and only for a short period of time.

The last six weeks of my pregnancy, and Lucy's birth, were very closely monitored. I was asked to come into hospital for that time and I was surrounded by women who were worried about their own pregnancies, each with a story to tell. I, with my attempt to remain calm and confident, became a sitting target. I began knitting classes by my bedside in order to try and distract them, but it was not wholly successful as a tactic.

The consultant however was always encouraging and reassuring and in this I know I was unusually fortunate. 'Nature is wonderful!' he said to his students as he showed them how the baby had taken up a sideways position instead of the expected up-and-down one. This had prevented most of the things about which he had been concerned, that my breathing would become restricted, or the baby would feel squashed and decide to be born early. It did cause another problem of how they were going to get her out, but this he seemed to treat as an interesting challenge rather than an enormous difficulty. The positive nature of his approach only really came home to me when he shared with me his dilemma of which angle to make the

Micheline as a toddler (far left) and below with her daughter Lucy, 'a very strong young woman in her own right'.

incision – vertically or horizontally. The easiest for him would be a vertical cut, but this worried him because it might mean I could only have two children, whereas a horizontal approach would enable me to have four!

For the first time in my life I felt as though the medical profession was using its highly developed skills to help me achieve something I truly wanted. In fact without these skills neither of us could have survived. I cannot help but feel grateful that I live in a 'rich' country where such help is available.

My long stay did mean that half the hospital knew about us and wanted to see this baby as soon as she was born. I remember the sound of the mobile incubator wheeling along from the Special Care Baby Unit, with a beautiful bright-eyed baby, only two hours old, and an entourage of nurses, friends and domestic staff, laughing, admiring, planning little gifts and asking if they could bring their relatives to see her. I contrasted this with the sense of tragedy and sorrow that had surrounded my early days, and wondered what had made the difference. It certainly could not be explained simply by the fact that it was 32 years later. I know that disabled infants are still greeted with shock and misery most of the time. Was it because I was able to welcome her completely, including her impairment, that it allowed everyone else to follow suit? It was true that for me it was the unknown factors of our life ahead which scared me, not the known hand of cards with which I had been dealt. Brittle bones to me was a known scenario, but to most people it is not. To most people the reality of any impairment which is not one you have yourself is a leap in the dark. In the absence of close relationships with disabled people, which is still true for the majority of the population, the dreadful legacy of the past with its eugenic undertones thoroughly distorts our view of disability, leading us endlessly back into the circle of fear, exclusion, ignorance, fear.

Lucy is now 14 years old, a very strong young woman in her own right. But her world is still unsafe, her place in it still conditional on the judgement of medical professionals. Many of her disabled peers are not by her side in mainstream society, but are still in segregated institutions of all kinds, put there by the non-disabled world. We both still need our circle of friends to remind us that our battle is not just for us, but for them, for their humanity. All real relationships are two-way things. Perhaps if we put our resources into building relationships instead of replacing them with 'things' we would not be afraid of the idea of dependency, of human need. We would see it as a gift. ■

Micheline Mason is a writer and disability campaigner. Her books include *Disability Equality in the Classroom* and *Nothing Special*.

Chinese surgeons extracting vital organs from condemned prisoners. Indian villagers selling a kidney for a dowry. And all to feed the booming global traffic in human organs for transplant. A shocking report from **Nancy Scheper-Hughes**.

The new

George Soros is best known as a world-class billionaire financier. But in a recent issue of *Atlantic Monthly* he finds himself analyzing some of the deficiencies of the global capitalist economy. It's a fairly elementary exercise but since it comes from someone in his position we tend to sit up and take notice.

What bothers Mr Soros most is the erosion of social values in the face of anti-social, market values. Not that markets are to be blamed, of course. By their very nature markets are indiscriminate, promiscuous and inclined to reduce everything – including human beings, their labor and even their reproductive capacity – to the status of commodities.

But while a market economy is generally a good thing, says Mr Soros, we cannot live by markets alone. And the real dilemma, he points out, is that the global *market* has far outstripped the development of a mediating global *society*.

Indeed, there is nothing stable or sacrosanct about the 'commodity candidacy' of things. And nowhere is this more dramatically illustrated than in the booming market in human organs from both living and dead donors.

These organs are used for transplant surgery, a business driven by the simple market calculus of supply and demand. With desperation built in on both sides of the equation – deathly ill 'buyers' and desperately needy 'sellers' – local and religious beliefs in the sanctity of the body have collapsed under the weight of market demands.

These demands are amplified by medical talk about the scarcity of organs. In the US, for example, there are close to 50,000 people currently on various organ waiting lists.

But the very idea of organ scarcity has to be questioned. It's an artificially created need, invented by transplant technicians and dangled before the eyes of an ever-expanding sick, ageing, and dying population. And it's a scarcity that can never under any circumstances be satisfied, for underlying the need is the quintessentially human denial and refusal of death.

Japanese sociologist T Awaya describes the trend more bluntly: 'We are now eyeing each others' bodies greedily, as a potential source of detachable spare parts with which to extend our lives.' And he calls it a form of 'social or "friendly" cannibalism'.

While unwilling to condemn it outright, Awaya does want organ donors and recipients to face squarely just what kind of social exchange they are engaged in.

Global flow

Over the past 30 years, organ transplantation has developed from being an experimental procedure performed in a few advanced medical centers, to being a fairly common therapeutic one carried out in hospitals and clinics throughout the world.

Kidney transplantation is now conducted in the US, in most European and Asian countries, in several South American and Middle Eastern countries, and four African nations. Survival rates have increased markedly over the past decade, although rates of infection are higher in Brazil, India and China, which rely more on living donors, than in the US, Canada and Western Europe.

The gap between supply and demand is

cannibalism

NCNA / CAMERA PRESS

wider in countries where there are strong religious sanctions or cultural inhibitions with respect to 'brain death' or the improper handling of the dead body. But sanctions in one country may stimulate organ sales in a neighbouring one. Wealthy patients have shown willingness to travel great distances to secure a transplant, even in areas where survival rates are quite poor. And with the globalization of the economy, the circulation of bodies and body parts increasingly transcends national boundaries.

In general, the movement and flow of living donor organs – mostly kidneys – is from South to North, from poor to rich, from black and brown to white, and from female to male bodies. For many years desperate Japanese nationals have used intermediaries with connections to the underworld of organized crime – the so-called 'body mafia' – to locate paid kidney donors in other countries. One ring of *yakuza* gangsters, operating through connections at a major medical center in Boston, US, was uncovered by journalists and broken up by police a decade ago.

More recently, Japanese kidney patients travelled to Taiwan and Singapore to purchase organs obtained – without consent – from executed prisoners. This practice was roundly condemned by the World Medical Association and prohibited in 1994.

China's 'killing-machine'

But today, China stands alone in continuing to use organs of executed prisoners for transplant surgery. Because China enacted a rule in 1984 stipulating that 'the use of corpses or organs of executed criminals must be kept strictly secret, and attention must be paid to avoid negative repercussions', most doctors and public officials in China deny any knowledge of the practice.

David Rothman, head of the Bellagio Task Force now investigating allegations of traffic in organs worldwide, visited major hospitals in Beijing and Shanghai in 1995. There he interviewed surgeons and others about the technical and the social dimensions of transplant surgery as practised at their units.

While the surgeons and hospital administrators answered the technical questions freely and accurately they responded with blank stares to inquiries such as: 'Where do donated organs come from?', 'How many foreigners come to the medical institutions seeking transplants?', 'How much do the hospitals charge for various transplant operations?' No-one would break the official code of silence on this delicate topic.

But Mr Lin of San Francisco, California tells a disturbing story – one that is repeated by many other recent Chinese immigrants to the US. Just before coming to live in California two years ago he visited a friend at the same medical center in

Shanghai visited by Professor Rothman. In the bed next to his friend was a wealthy and politically well-situated professional man who told Mr Lin that he was waiting for a kidney transplant later that day. His new kidney would arrive, he said, as soon as a prisoner was executed that morning. Minutes after the condemned prisoner was shot in the head, doctors present at the execution would quickly extract his kidneys and rush them to the hospital where two transplant-surgery teams would be assembled and waiting.

Human-rights activists report that in China the state systematically takes kidneys, cornea, liver tissue and heart valves from executed prisoners. While these precious organs are sometimes given to reward politically well-connected Chinese, often they are sold to medical 'visitors' from Hong Kong, Taiwan or Singapore who will pay up to $30,000 for an organ.

Harry Wu, the Chinese human-rights activist, was among the first to reveal this. At a conference at Berkeley's Department of Anthropology Wu said: 'I interviewed a doctor who routinely participated in removing kidneys from condemned prisoners. In one case she said, breaking down in the telling, that she had even participated in a surgery in which two kidneys were removed from a living, anaesthetized prisoner late at night. The following morning the prisoner was executed by a bullet to the head.'

In this chilling case, brain death followed, rather than preceded, the harvesting of vital organs. Wu and others claim that the Chinese Government takes organs from 2,000 executed prisoners each year. That number is growing because the list of capital crimes in China has been expanded to accommodate the demand for organs. Amnesty International has recently reported that a new 'strike hard' anti-crime campaign has led to a sharp increase in the number of people executed, among them petty thieves and tax cheaters. In 1996 alone at least 6,100 death sentences were handed out and at least 4,367 confirmed executions took place.

REX FEATURES

Wedding preparations in India. Many poor villagers now accept that they might have to sell an organ to raise a dowry for a daughter.

David Rothman, among others, believes that what lies behind the draconian anti-crime campaign is a 'thriving medical business' that relies on prisoners' organs. The state is sponsoring, he says, an 'insatiable killing machine', driven by the rapacious need for fresh and healthy organs.

Organs bazaar

But nowhere more openly and flagrantly than in India has the 'shortage' encouraged a sale of kidneys. There a veritable organs bazaar is operated out of private clinics, especially in Bombay and Madras.

Until a new law last year prohibited the sale of living donor organs, patients from the Gulf States – Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Oman and the United Arab Emirates – travelled to India to purchase a kidney. Now that market has been driven underground. Recent reports by human-rights activists, journalists and medical anthropologists indicate that the international kidney trade has declined but left in its wake an even larger underground market controlled and organized by cash-rich crime gangs expanding out from the heroin trade into the organs trade.

Checking the lists of the dead. Chinese executions increased to 4,367 in 1996, in line with rising demand for organs

J.C. CALLOW / PANOS

In some cases they have the backing of local political leaders. Organ 'donors' are recruited by 'agents' to sell a spare organ in order to cancel crippling debts, to pay for a necessary operation, or to cover large family expenses. And where there is an illegal market there are likely to be other criminal practices as well.

Professor Veena Das of the University of New Delhi has come across stories, from reliable sources, of 'organ theft'. She told the story of a young woman with stomach pains who went to a small clinic where she was told by the doctor: 'It looks like you have a bladder stone and we had better remove it.' But in fact the doctor used it as a pretext to operate and remove a kidney which he had contracted to deliver to an intermediary for an undisclosed third party.

Lawrence Cohen, a medical anthropologist from Berkeley who has worked in the south and western regions of India, reports that in a very brief period the idea of trading 'a kidney for a dowry' has caught on and become a fairly common strategy for poor parents. Cohen notes that ten years ago, when villagers and townspeople first heard through newspaper reports of kidney sales occurring in the big cities of Bombay and Madras, they responded with predictable alarm and revulsion. Today, some of these same villagers speak matter-of-factly about when it might be necessary to sell a 'spare' organ. Some village parents say they can no longer complain about the fate of a dowry-less daughter. 'Haven't you got a spare kidney?' one unsympathetic neighbour or another is likely to respond.

'Compensated gifting'

Meanwhile, in Brazil, there are over 100 medically certified centers for kidney transplant, 21 centers for heart transplant and 13 centers for liver transplant. The medical demand for organs to keep these clinics operating has meant tolerance toward various unofficial incentives to encourage donation.

Rather than rampant commercialism the more ambiguous concept of 'compensated gifting' is passively accepted by many transplant surgeons as an ethically 'neutral' practice.

As one Rio doctor explained: 'I don't want to know what kinds of private exchanges have taken place between my [kidney] patients and their [living] donors. But obviously you do have to suspect something when the patient is a wealthy Rio socialite and her "donor" is a poor, barefoot "cousin" from the country.'

The compensations can be modest – a lump sum of $1,000 for example – or extravagant. In one incident a niece agreed to donate a kidney to her wealthy uncle in exchange for a suburban house complete with amenities. Even though the operation failed the niece still got her part of the bargain. 'Wouldn't you say that was a fair deal?' the surgeon asked.

These sentiments are shared with transplant surgeons and bio-ethicists in other countries. Labor is sold, sex is sold, sperm and ova are sold, even babies are sold in international adoption. 'What makes kidneys so special, so exempt?' asks Dr Abdullah Daar from Oman.

Meanwhile, the American Medical Association is currently considering financial incentives to enable people to bequeath organs to their heirs or to charity. One proposal is for a 'futures market' in cadaveric organs that would operate through contracts. These would provide that if, at the time of the seller's death, organs are successfully transplanted a substantial sum would be paid to the seller's designee. A sum of $5,000 per major organ utilized is suggested. The proposal is based on the idea that pure gifting can be expected among family members, but financial inducements might be necessary to provide organs for strangers.

At present the AMA is exploring several options. One is a fixed price per organ. Another is to let market forces – supply and demand – set the price. The idea still makes a lot of doctors in the US uncomfortable but the AMA is pushing to get a state-run pilot project off the ground this year.

> ***'We are now eyeing each others' bodies greedily,' he says, 'as a potential source of detachable spare parts with which to extend our lives'.***

While some 'transplant surgeons are not alarmed by such commercial exchanges, in Brazil a large coalition of civil-rights activists, lawyers and public officials are. They have mobilized support in passing a radical new law which went into effect on 1 January this year. The ruling – similar to laws in Belgium and Spain – makes all Brazilian adults into universal organ-donors at death unless the individual officially declares themselves a 'non-donor'. Behind the law, I was told by key legislators, was the desire to eliminate any possibility of 'organ trafficking' in Brazil, by mass producing a surfeit of freely-available organs for transplant surgery.

The law was also intended to 'educate' the poor who had, for many years, been terrorized by rumours of kidnapping and murder with the aim of extracting organs. 'If everyone is a potential donor we have the basis for building a truly democratic society,' said one academic bio-ethicist.

But to the 'average' man and woman on the streets of Rio, Recife and Salvador the new law was yet another unwelcome bureaucratic assault on their bodies. The only way to exempt oneself was for adults to request new identity cards or drivers licences stamped with the logo: 'I am not a donor of organs or tissues.'

Last August I visited various civil offices in large and small cities where long lines of anxious people, most of them poor and from Brazil's notorious *favelas,* were seeking to opt out of compulsory donation before the law came into force. 'God forbid,' whispered Rosa, a young Black school-cafeteria assistant who had taken her own lunch break to get the stamp that, as she saw it, would save her body from greedy doctors or over-zealous mortuary police wanting to transfer her young organs to some 'wealthy old so-and-so'.

Variants of the same story were repeated up and down the line of those waiting at the Felix Pacheco institute in LeBlon, Rio, not far from Copacabana Beach. House-painter and pedestrian Seu Jose said: 'Now we are doubly afraid of being hit by a car. We were always afraid of crazy drivers. Now we have to worry about ambulance workers who may be paid on the side to declare us "dead" before our time is really up.'

Since August the momentum against the new law is growing, evidenced in angry television talk-shows, tabloid editorials, radio reports and on-the-spot interviews with frightened residents of Brazil's giant urban shantytowns.

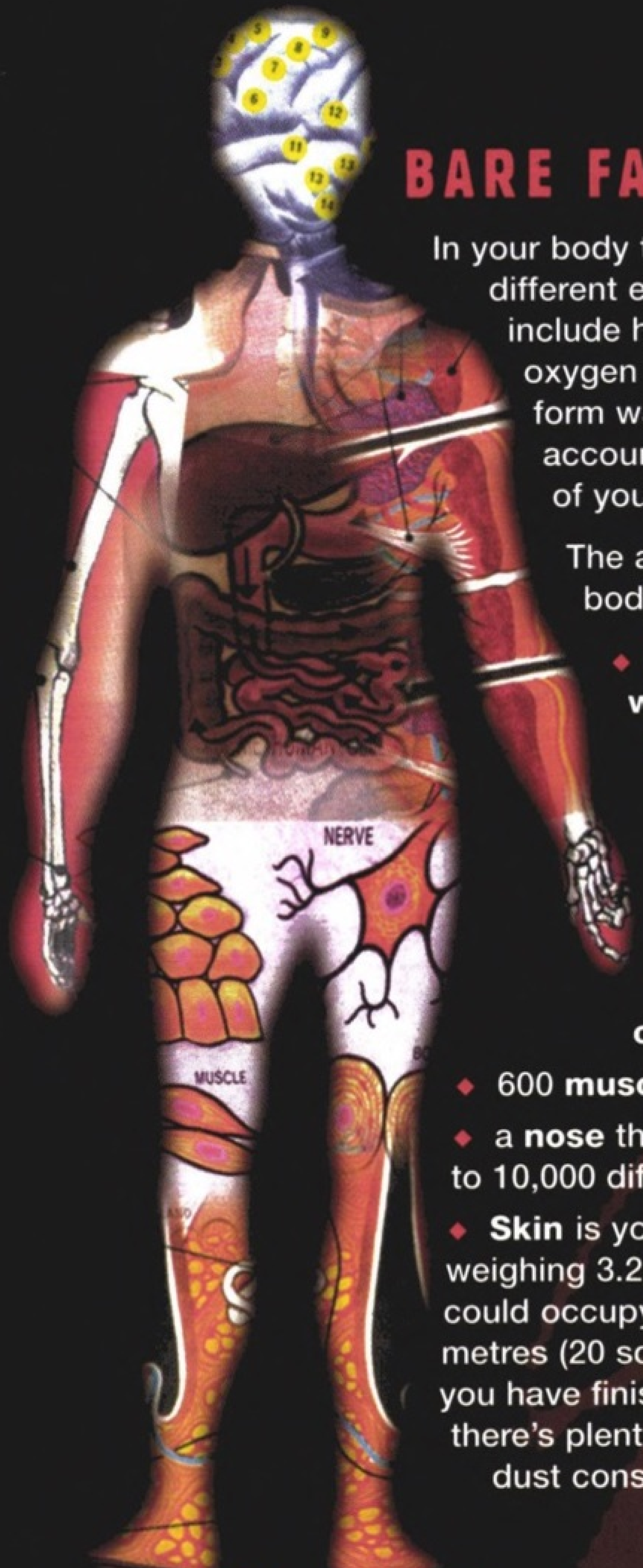
While to transplant surgeons an organ is just an organ, a heart is just a pump and a kidney is just a filter, a thing, a commodity better used than wasted, to vast numbers of ordinary people an organ is something else – a lively, animate, spiritualized part of the self that most would still like to take with them when they die. ■

Down and out in Brazil. 'We were always afraid of crazy drivers. Now we have to worry about ambulance workers paid to declare us "dead".'

DAVID LOMAX / ROBERT HARDING

Nancy Scheper-Hughes is an anthropologist and a member and co-author of the Bellagio Task Force Report on Transplantation, *Bodily Integrity and the International Traffic in Organs*, 1997.

FACTS : TH

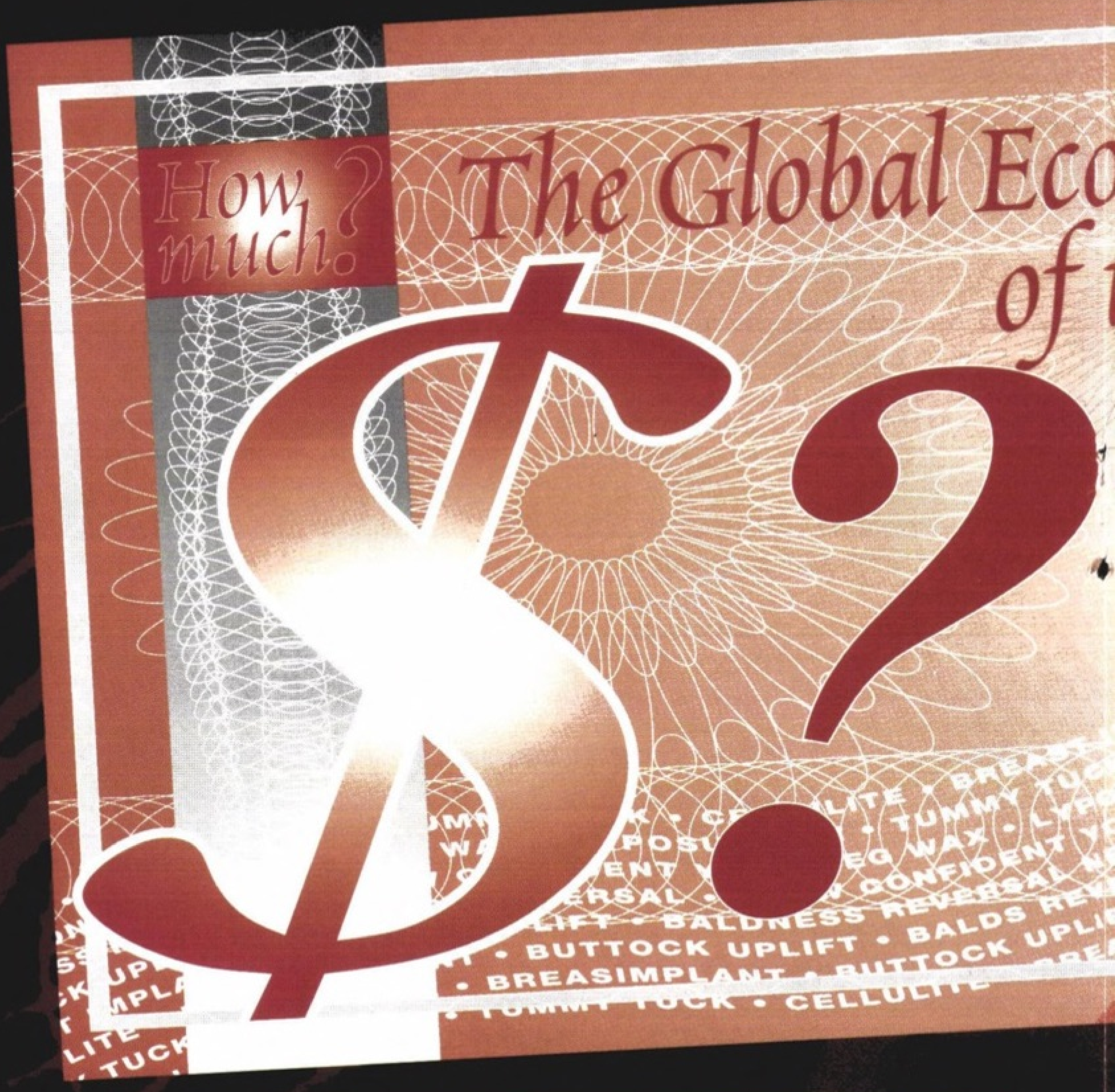


BARE FACTS

In your body there are 24 different elements. These include hydrogen and oxygen combining to form water, which accounts for two-thirds of your body weight.[1]

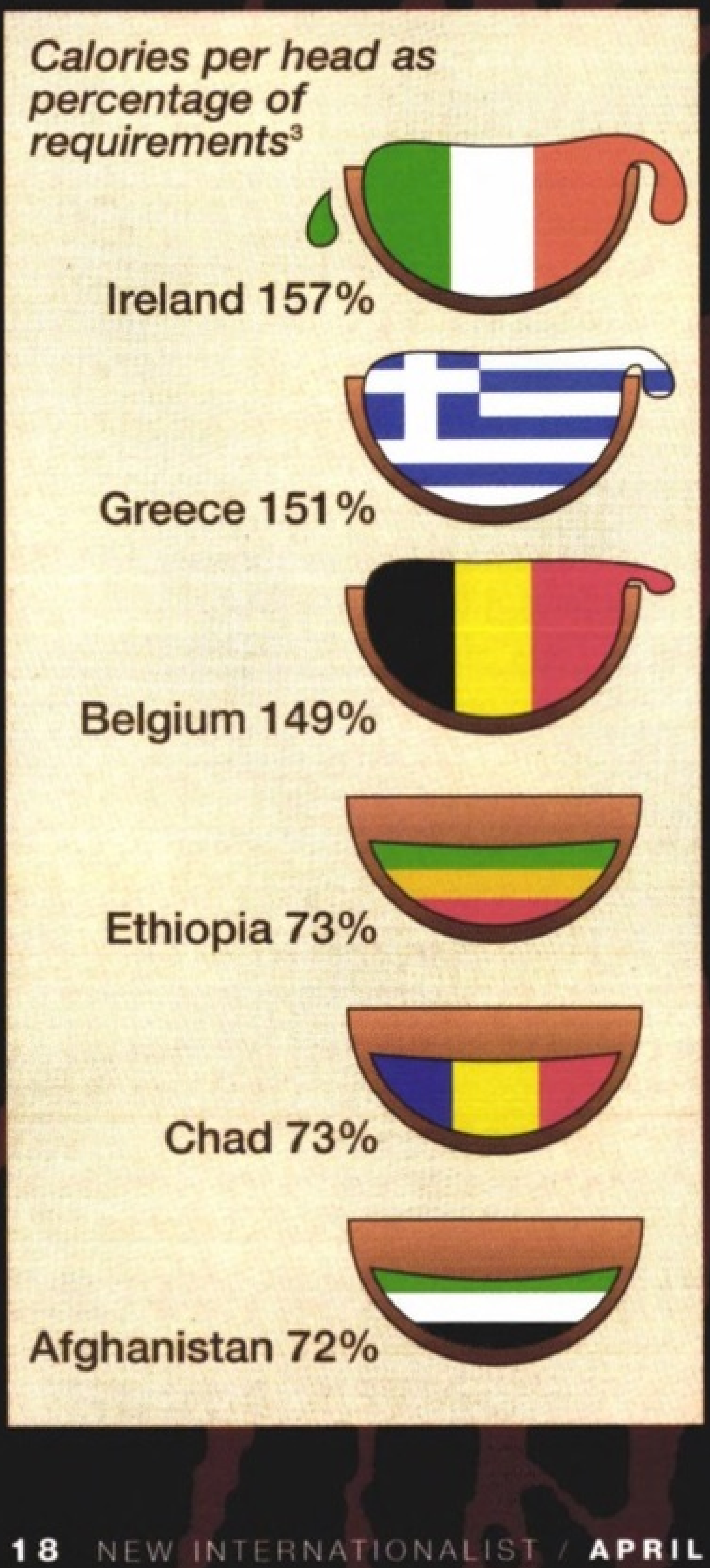
The average human body contains:

- **40 litres of water**
- 200 **bones**
- 7.5 metres of **intestines**
- 1,400cc of **brain** capacity
- 1,000 billion **cells**
- 600 **muscles**
- a **nose** that can identify up to 10,000 different odours[1]
- **Skin** is your largest organ, weighing 3.25kg. Peeled off it could occupy about 1.9 sq metres (20 sq ft). Even after you have finished with it, there's plenty: 90% of house-dust consists of dead skin.[2]



BASIC NEEDS

An adult body needs a calorie intake of between 2,350 and 2,600 calories per day, depending on climate and kinds of work performed.

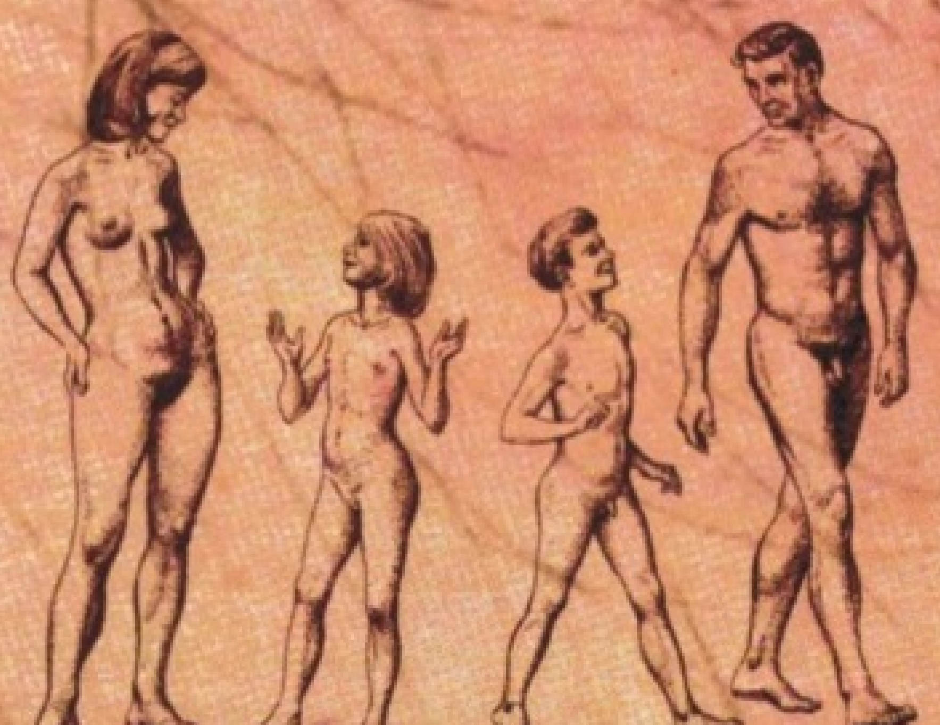


People in industrialized countries generally consume far more calories than their bodies need – calorie intake in Australia, South Africa, New Zealand, Britain, Canada and the US ranges from 124% to 138% of needs.

People in several poor countries generally consume less than their bodies need – calorie intake in Mozambique, Angola, Somalia and Rwanda ranges from 77% to 82% of needs.

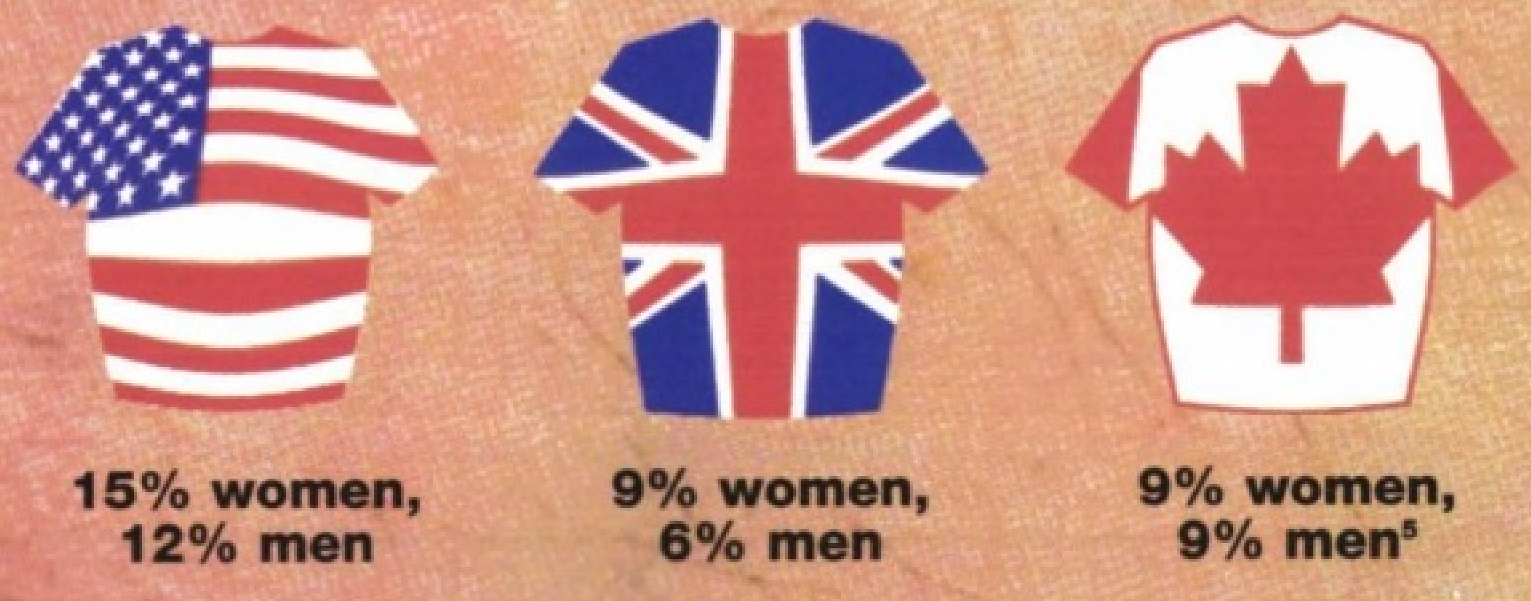
CHANGING BODIES

Bodies are changing from generation to generation – in some parts of the world faster than others.



Tall – Australian primary school children are on average 1.25cm taller than their predecessors were in 1972, and in Scotland they are 5cm taller. The Japanese are also growing, putting on a few centimetres with each generation.[4]

Wide – In the US people are putting on weight but not getting taller. Middle-aged obesity is a medical problem in a number of rich countries.[5]



But the overall trend is that human bodies have been shrinking for the past 200,000 years, with a sharp downturn – in brain size as well as height – after the last ice age 10,000 years ago.[4]

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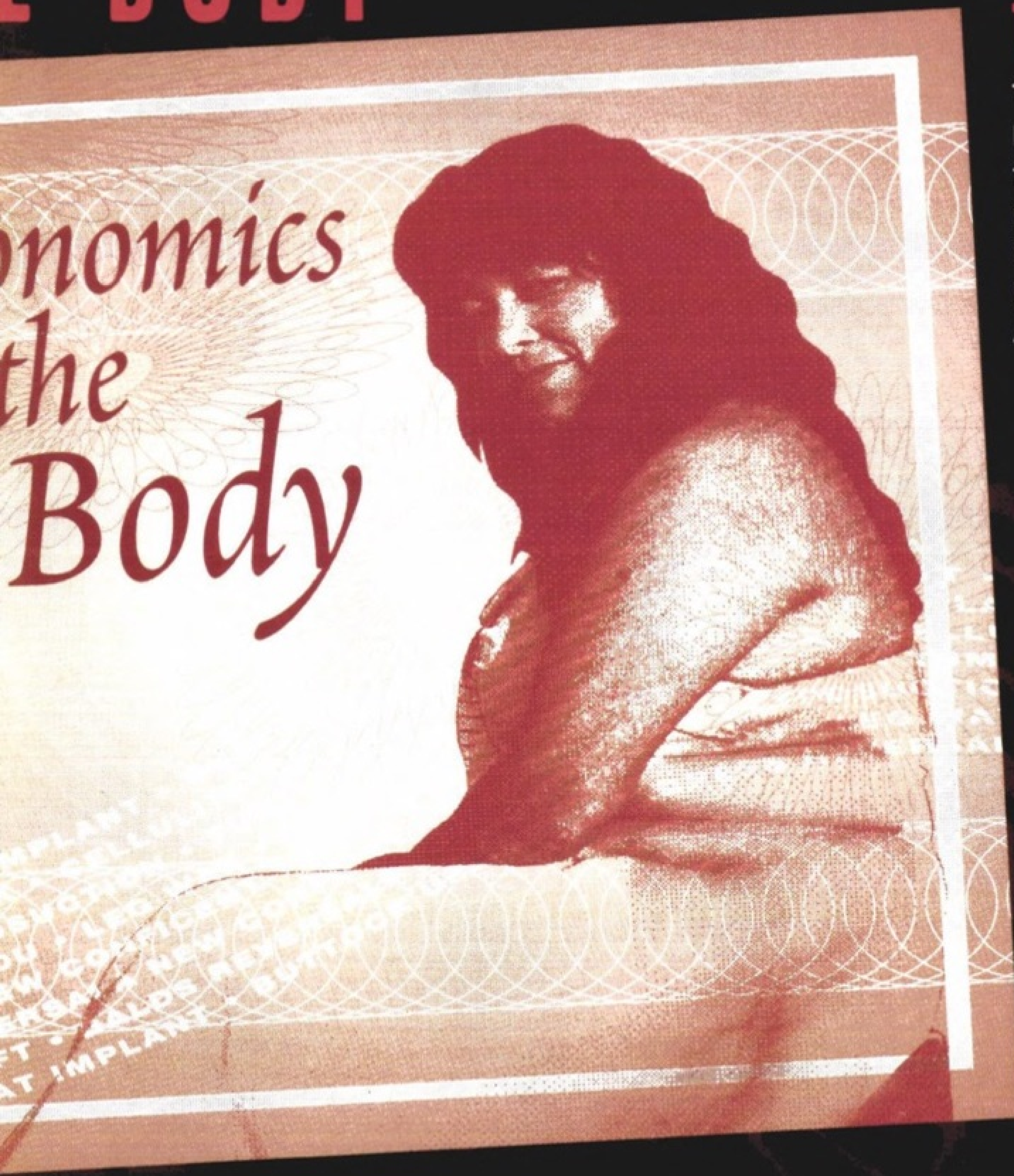
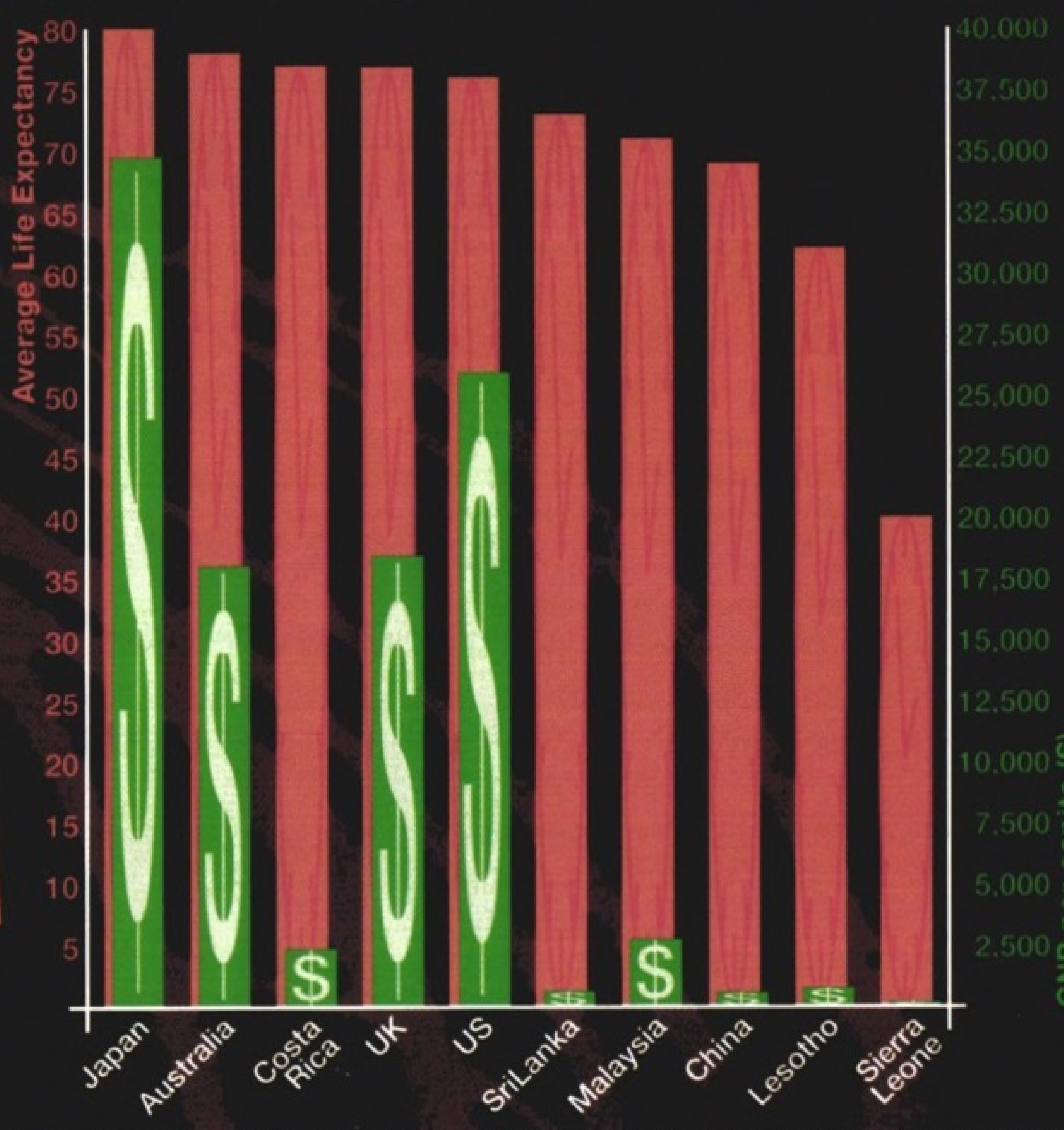


THE LONG LIFE

The richer the country the longer its people's bodies tend to last. But this is not always the case – provision of state-funded healthcare is another crucial factor. It means that people living in a 'poor' country like Costa Rica may enjoy a higher life expectancy than those living in a 'rich' country like the US.

Average life expectancy by country and GNP per capita[3]



GLOBAL BODYKILLERS

The biggest killers in 1996:

- Infectious diseases and parasites took 17 million lives. Most prevalent were respiratory diseases, tuberculosis, malaria and diarrhoea.

- Circulatory diseases such as heart diseases and stroke, claimed 15 million lives.[8]

Water: the majority of the world's population still lacks adequate sanitation, creating conditions for infectious diseases to spread. In sub-Saharan Africa only 42% of people have access to safe drinking water.

Healthcare: many people still lack access to healthcare – 34% in sub-Saharan Africa and 26% in Latin America and the Caribbean.[9]

WEAR AND TEAR

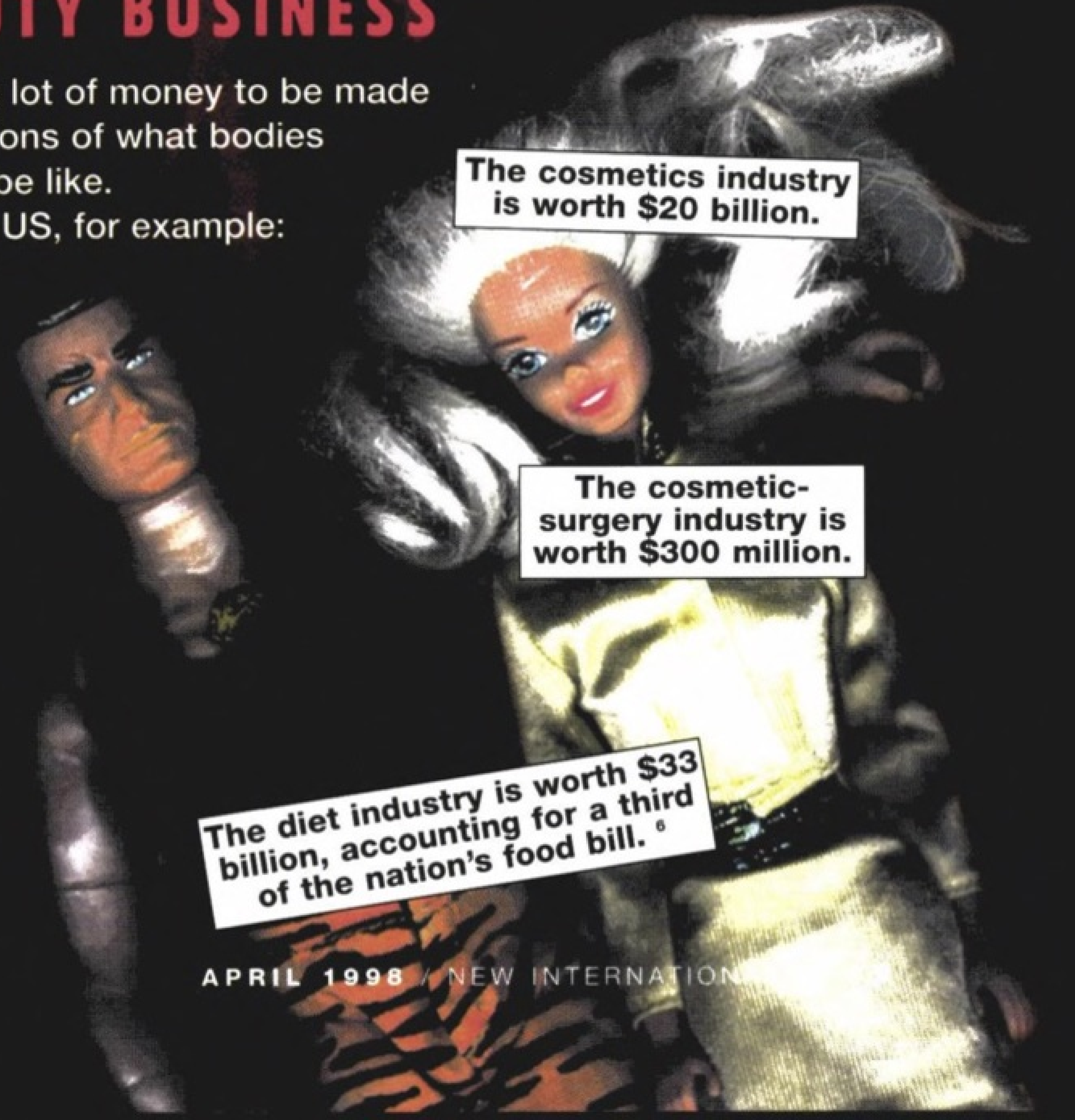
The clothes we put on our bodies provide the fashion industry with huge profits – and are linked to some of the most exploitative labour conditions in the world.

- US basketball star Michael Jordan earned $20 million in 1992 for endorsing Nike shoes – more than Nike's 30,000-strong Indonesian workforce did making them.
- Disney Corporation's Pochahontas shirts sell at $10.97 each and are made by workers in Haiti who earn just $10.77 a week for making 375 shirts an hour.[7]

BEAUTY BUSINESS

There's a lot of money to be made from notions of what bodies 'should' be like.

In the US, for example:



The cosmetics industry is worth $20 billion.

The cosmetic-surgery industry is worth $300 million.

The diet industry is worth $33 billion, accounting for a third of the nation's food bill.[6]

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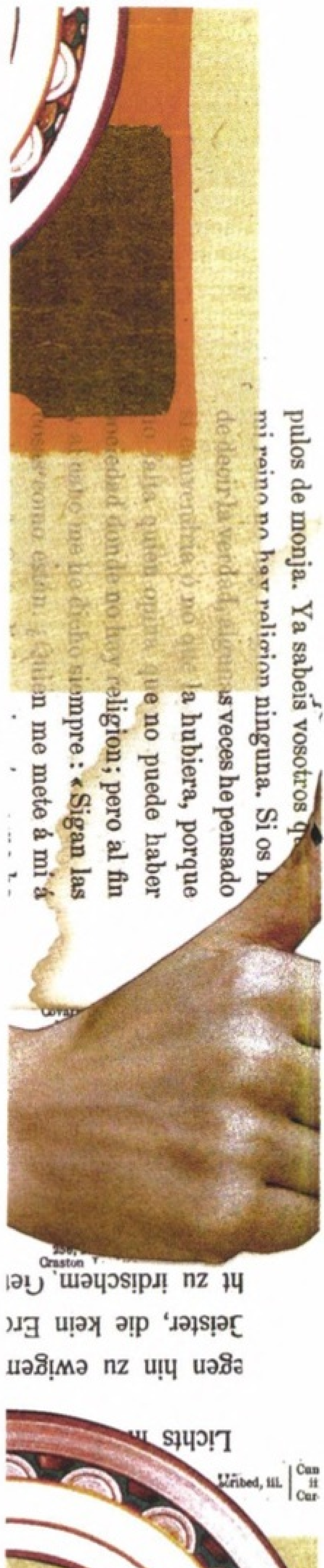
1 *The Human Body*, Diamond Reference, London 1994. 2 *Ninety Per Cent of Dust*, video by Mandeep Dillon, Oxford Video makers. 3 *The State of the World's Children Report 1997*, UNICEF, New York. 4 *Elle* magazine, September 1997, London. 5 *State of Health Atlas*, Judith Mackay, Simon & Schuster, 1993. 6 *The Beauty Myth*, Naomi Woolf, Chatto and Windus, 1990. 7 *No Sweat*, ed. Andrew Ross, Verso, 1997. 8 *The State of World Health Report 1997*, WHO, Geneva. 9 *The State of World Health Report 1995*, WHO,

The genetics of blame

A gene for homelessness? Is this a joke? Not entirely, for those who subscribe to the burgeoning new mix of science and politics called 'neurogenetic determinism', writes **Steven Rose**.



EARLY last December the science writer Matt Ridley contributed a column to the British newspaper, the *Daily Telegraph*. He argued that, contrary to long-held common-sense views, genetic research now proved that how we are brought up and the nature of our family background have little effect on the sort of people we become. All important aspects of our personality are somehow preordained by the genes in our bodies. Hence, he concluded bluntly, interventions by social workers into our lives would not solve these problems; it was time for political conservatives to abandon their residual moral authoritarianism and move towards policies more in accord with biological realism.

Ridley's views on the importance of genes are shared by much of the press. Week on week newspapers report what are seen as major breakthroughs in biological and medical understanding, though few draw out the seeming political lessons with such clarity. A random sampling of newspapers last autumn offered: the discovery of a gene contributing to IQ and another for schizophrenia, Edward Kennedy's belief that he carried 'the genes for alcoholism', and an announcement that mail-order gene tests would soon be available.

Genes have been located, it is claimed, not only for diseases like breast cancer but for homosexuality, alcoholism and criminality. And there is the notorious and only half-facetious speculation by Daniel Koshland, former editor of the prestigious *Science* journal, that there might even be genes for homelessness.

At the same time as drugs to extend life, improve memory, prevent compulsive shopping, make newspaper headlines, university scientists call press conferences in which they claim to have discovered the biological causes of sexuality or of violence in modern society.

In 1995 the London-based medical charity, the CIBA Foundation, announced that it was sponsoring a closed meeting of behaviour geneticists whose research pointed to a 'biological' origin for the incidence of violent crime – and of course its concentration in non-white inner city ghettos. An earlier attempt to hold a similar meeting in the US had to be called off when protesters objected to its racist assumptions.

The emerging synthesis of genetics and the brain sciences – neurogenetics – and its philosophical and political offspring, neurogenetic determinism offers the prospect of identifying, ascribing causal power to, and eventually modifying genes affecting brain and behaviour. In a world full of individual pain and social disorder, neurogenetics claims to be able to answer the question of where we should look not merely to explain but also to change our condition. Give social reasons their due, the claim runs, but in the last analysis what really determines things is biology. Urban violence, homelessness and psychic distress are desperately serious features of modern life to which solutions are required – although no-one to my knowledge is researching the genetic causes of homophobia, racism or financial fraud. There is a widespread despair at the failure of the socialist – or even social-democrat – project of remodelling society to alleviate these ills. Under such circumstances it is easy to understand the attractiveness of seeking explanations – and interventions – rooted in human biology. This drift from the social was memorably summed up by Margaret Thatcher when she claimed there is no such thing as society – only individuals and their families.

The question is whether such explanations are valid and useful or whether they merely exacerbate social distress whilst failing to provide meaningful scientific insights into the origins of the problems they seek to understand.

This is not a new debate; it has recurred in each generation at least since Darwin's day. What is new today is the way in which the mystique of the new genetics is seen as strengthening the genetic argument. At its simplest, neurogenetic determinism argues a directly causal relationship between gene and behaviour. A man is homosexual because he has a 'gay brain', itself the product of 'gay genes', and a woman is depressed because she has genes 'for' depression. There is violence on the streets because people have 'violent' or 'criminal' genes; people get drunk because they have genes 'for' alcoholism.

Such simplification, with its cheaply seductive dichotomies of nature or nurture, genes or environment, is fallacious. The phenomena of life are always and simultaneously about nature *and* nurture. Human existence and experience is always and simultaneously biological *and* social. Adequate explanations must involve both. Yet again and again one finds the simplistic, unqualified, determinist claim making the headlines and setting the research agenda.

The undoubted successes of molecular biology since the discovery of the double-helical structure of DNA in 1953 have fostered a gung-ho triumphalism amongst such genetic propagandists – the belief that their science can explain everything that is to be explained about the human condition. That they can rebuild humanity in an improved image if allowed. 'Give me a gene and I can move the world,' seems to be their claim. Furthermore, the new neurogenetic determinists want not merely to do their science but also to control its uses. Sociobiologist EO Wilson, for instance, advocates a code of ethics which is 'genetically accurate and hence completely fair'.

SEXUALITY
CRIME
ALCO
HOMELESSNESS

VOLKER STRÄTER

So is such neurogenetic determinism good science? I believe that it is not, that it constantly oversimplifies the complexity of human behaviour and shoehorns it into genetic models.

Take violence as an example. To make the claim stick, determinism has first of all to lump together many quite different activities – rape and arson, child-beating, pub brawls, strikers confronting police on picket lines, civil war. The US fighter pilot directing a smart missile at a Baghdad bunker is supposed to be showing the same biological propensity as a man beating up his lover. All are examples of some brain process going on inside 'the violent individual', a brain process that can be objectively quantified, separated into 'genetic' and 'environmental' components, and then potentially drugged or engineered away. As if anyone could really believe that genocide in Bosnia could have been prevented by manipulating the serotonin levels in the brains of Serbian generals or politicians.

Such determinism serves to relocate social problems to the individual, thus 'blaming the victim' rather than exploring the societal roots and determinants of the issues that concern us. Violence in modern society is no longer to be explained in terms of inner-city squalor, unemployment, extremes of wealth and poverty and the loss of the hope that by collective effort we might create a better society. Rather, it is a problem resulting from the presence of individual violent persons, themselves violent as a result of disorders in their biochemical or genetic constitution.

But in a strange way, the blame is simultaneously placed upon them and lifted from them. Where once a murderer might have been regarded as morally culpable, or the cause of his violence sought in an unhappy or abused childhood, now it is argued to be due to chemical imbalances in his brain, themselves the consequence of faulty genes or birthing difficulties. Thus in a recent US court case the lawyer of Stephen Mobley, sentenced to death for the violent murder of a pizza-parlour manager, seeks permission to mount a genetic defence against the sentence, claiming that the killer may carry a gene which predisposes him to violence. In which case Mobley would not be 'responsible' for the murder he committed. 'It was not me, it was my genes.'

Another interesting twist is demonstrated in the case of homosexuality. If it is 'in the genes' then there is no way a society, however homophobic, can justify condemning gay people for following their genetic dictates. It is not surprising therefore that certain sections of the gay and lesbian community have actively welcomed the genetic claims or that the Christian fundamentalist right are worried about just how far the determinist argument can be stretched.

The second immediate consequence of such determinism is that attention and funding is diverted from the social to the molecular. If rates of alcoholism are catastrophically high amongst native Americans or aboriginal Australians, the ideology demands funding research into the genetics and biochemistry of alcoholism. Of course one can offer multiple forms of explanation for any phenomenon in the living world. Of course there are likely to be differences in the brains and bodies of people who become 'alcoholic' or 'violent' compared with those who are not – and research exploring these differences can be informative. But it doesn't necessarily provide an explanation or point to a solution. For example, crimes of violence are more frequently carried out by men than by women. One may argue that this says something about the Y chromosome, carried by men and not women. But the overwhelming majority of men are not violent criminals, so the policy implications of research seeking to explore the Y chromosome in the context of crime – short of selective abortion of all male foetuses – are negligible.

Violent crime is much higher in the US than in Europe. Could this be accounted for by some unique feature of American genes? Well, possibly, but pretty unlikely granted that much of the American population originated by migration from Europe. But also the rates of violent crime have changed dramatically over quite short time periods. For instance the death rate from homicide amongst young US males increased by 54 per cent between 1985 and 1994. No biologically based explanation can account for this increase, so what has changed in the US over this period which might account for such an increase? What is different about the organization of US society from that of Europe? Could one important difference be the estimated 280 million handguns in personal possession in the US? Unlike genetic ones, such hypotheses may give clues for real solutions.

Good, effective science requires a better recognition of the variety of causes and possible solutions. Failing this it becomes a waste of human ingenuity and resources, a powerful ideological strategy of victim-blaming and a distraction from the real tasks that both science and society require. ■

Steven Rose is Professor of Biology at the Open University, Britain. His latest book *Lifelines* exploring the themes of this article, was published by Penguin, London, last September.

Whatever I feel...

'Boy or girl?' tends to be the first question asked when a baby is born. And a cursory look at the genitals usually provides the answer. But it's not that simple, says **Zachary I Nataf**.

'WHATEVER I feel, that's the way I am. I was born a girl, and that girl died one day and a boy was born. And the boy was born from that girl in me. I am proud of who I am. A lot of people actually envy us.'

Chi-Chi, who lives in a village in the Dominican Republic, is speaking to film-maker Rolando Sanchez for his 1997 documentary *Guevote*.

The film portrays the daily lives of Chi-Chi and Bonny, two 'pseudo-hermaphrodites', and the way in which their families, partners and other villagers respond to them.

They are not alone. A rare form of pseudo-hermaphroditism was first found among a group of villagers in the Dominican Republic in the early 1970s. Thirty-eight people were traced with the condition, coming from 23 extended families and spanning four generations.

Chi-Chi's mother has ten children. Three of those ten are girls, three of them are boys 'and four are of this special sort.' she says. 'I knew that this sort of thing existed before I had my own kids. But I never thought that it would happen to me... I told them to accept their destiny, because God knows what he's doing. And I said that real men often achieve less than those who were born as girls. And that's how it turned out. My sons who are real men haven't achieved as much as the others.' [1]

The medical explanation is that, while still in the womb, some male babies are unable to produce the testosterone which helps external male genitals to develop. They are born with a labia-like scrotum, a clitoris-like penis and undescended testes.

In the Dominican Republic many of these children were first assumed to be female and were brought up as such. But because they were genetically male, they began to develop male characteristics at puberty, including penis growth and descending testes. Villagers gave these children the local name *guevedoche* or 'balls at twelve'.

For some scientists the phenomenon presented an ideal 'natural experiment' that would help them to prove once and for all that hormones are far more important than culture in the development of gender identity. A research team headed by Julliane Imperato-McGinley proposed that in a laissez-faire environment, with no medical or social intervention, the child would naturally develop a male gender identity at puberty, in spite of having been reared as female.[2]

Not everyone agreed with this rather simplistic approach, however. Ethnographer Gilbert Herdt pointed out the guevedoche were different and they knew it as they had compared their genitals with those of girls during public bathing. Villagers, who were familiar with the guevedoche over generations, accepted them as a 'third sex' category, sometimes referring to them as *machi-embra* (male-female).[3]

Furthermore, not all guevedoche wanted to adopt a male gender identity after puberty. In the documentary *Guevote,* Bonny relates the case of Lorenza. 'She had more chances as a woman. Lots of men fell in love with her. She always wore women's clothes and had very long hair. She liked it when men fell in love with her. That's why she wanted to stay a woman and not become a man.'

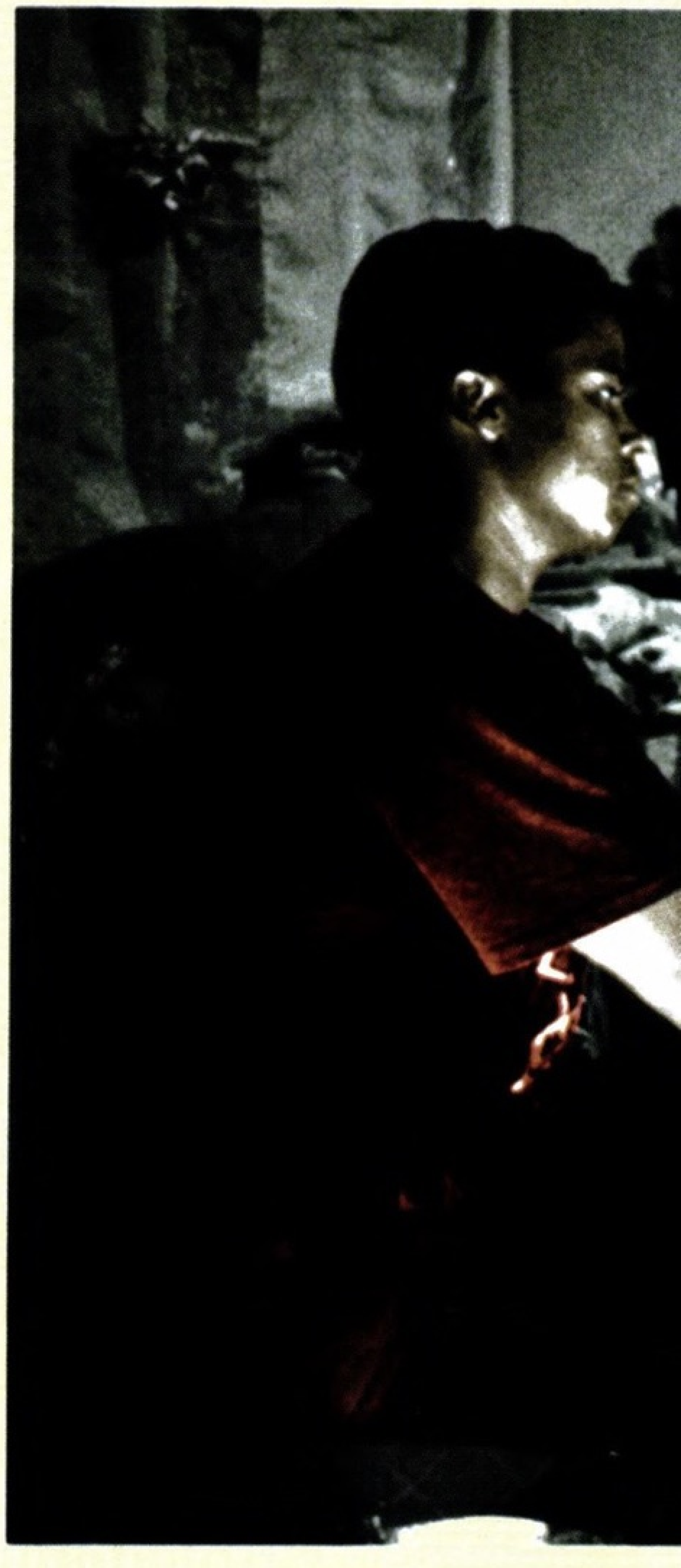
Here then is a community that recognizes the actual existence of 'third sex' people as part of human nature and creates corresponding gender roles to accommodate them. It's an attitude that enables Bonny to say: 'If I am like this, God will know why... If I feel good, why should I change things? This is how I grew up, why look for something else?'

The law and the knife

Such an accepting approach to gender ambiguity has not been the pattern in most of the Western world. Far from it.

Since the routine practice of correcting the ambiguous genitalia of intersexed children began in the US and Europe in the late 1950s, debates have raged about whether gender identity and roles are biologically determined or culturally determined.

The work of John Money and colleagues at Johns Hopkins University and Hospital, Maryland, has had a major impact on the treatment of intersex children, transsexuals and other sex-variant people.



Chi-Chi, a 'pseudo-hermaphrodite', and mother, as they appear in the documentary film, *Guevote*.

Money advised on the famous case of the identical twin boy who had been reassigned as a girl after he lost his penis in a circumcision accident at the age of seven months in 1963. The child underwent plastic surgery to make his genitals female-appearing and he was treated with female hormones at adolescence.

Between 1973 and 1975 Money reported a completely favourable outcome and this became the key case in the following 20 years. The case influenced the treatment of boys born with 'too small' penises, and led to the recommendation that their penises and testes be removed and the boys be surgically reassigned as girls before the age of three 'to grow up as complete a female as possible'. In these cases quality of life was based on ideas of adequate heterosexual penetration. According to the Johns Hopkins team, the twin had subsequently been 'lost to follow-up'.

But this was not so. As it turned out, the twin did not feel or act like a girl and had discarded prescribed oestrogen pills when aged 12. She had refused additional surgery to deepen the vagina that surgeons had constructed for her at 17 months, despite repeated attempts to convince her she would never find a partner unless she had surgery and lived as female. At the age of 14 the twin refused to return to Johns Hopkins and persuaded local physicians to provide a mastectomy, phalloplasty and male hormones. He now lives as an adult man.[4]

'one in 2,000 infants is born with ambiguous genitalia from about two-dozen causes'

Intersexuals, popularly referred to as 'hermaphrodites', are usually born with genitals somewhere between male and female – rarely with two complete sets as in myth. The number of such births is more common than most people realize, with the highest estimates in the US at four per cent of births.[5]

According to the Intersex Society of North America one in every 2,000 infants is born with ambiguous genitalia from about two-dozen causes. There are more than 2,000 surgeries performed in the US each year aimed at surgically assigning a sex to these intersex patients. The Intersex Society campaigns against what it sees as the unethical medical practice of performing cosmetic surgery on infants who cannot give consent.

Doctors believe that quality of life is only possible for individuals who conform to male or female sex and gender. But the founder of the Intersex Society, Cheryl Chase, believes that 'most people would be better off with no surgery'. Born with ambiguous genitalia herself she was raised as a boy until 18-months-old when physicians told her family that she was really a girl and removed her enlarged clitoris. At the age of eight she underwent an operation to remove what she later learned was the testicular part of her ovo-testes. She currently lives as a woman and, like many intersex individuals, is lesbian. The surgical excision and scar tissue has left her without clitoral sensation or orgasmic response. Says Ms Chase: '"Genital mutilation" is a phrase that's easy for us to apply to somebody who belongs to a Third World culture, but any mutilating practice that's delivered by licensed medical practitioners in our world has an aura of scientific credibility.'[6]

Her experience is shared by many intersexuals who as children underwent repeated unexplained examinations, surgery, pain and infection. This has gone on for four decades and in most cases the children have been 'lost to follow-up'. This means there has been no reliable medical data to assess the effects of surgery or to provide guidance for future practice.

Cosmetic genital surgery is used to 'normalize' the appearance of ambiguous genitalia. It is admitted by surgeons to be an attempt to alleviate a 'psychosocial emergency' rather than a medical one. Instead of offering intersex children and their families or friends counselling to support them in accepting difference, doctors whip up a crisis which they can then fix with available medical technology. Ambiguous genitals are referred to as 'deformed' before surgery and 'corrected' after. But the reported experience of intersexuals who

FAMA FILM AG

went through this in childhood is a sense of having been 'intact' before surgery and mutilated after it.

And children were often lied to. A typical example is recounted by a woman who, when her body began to change at the age of 12, was told that she needed surgery to remove her ovaries because she had cancer. What actually happened during the operation was her clitoris and newly descended testes were removed.

The adage that 'it is easier to dig a hole than build a pole' accounts for why most intersex individuals are made into girls. The standards which mark maleness allow penises as short as 2.5cm and femaleness allow clitorises only as large as 0.9 cm. Infants with appendages between 0.9 cm and 2.5 cm are, according to Suzanne Kessler, considered unacceptable and require surgical intervention. In some cases where parents haven't even noticed a problem doctors still insist on surgery. Baby girls as young as six weeks may be operated upon to deepen their vaginas, even though the surgery is not always successful and has to be repeated at various stages as they grow up.[4]

Some experts have their doubts. Dr Reiner, Assistant Professor of child and adolescent psychiatry at Johns Hopkins University warns against placing too great an emphasis on the genitals, pointing out that,'the brain is the most important sex organ in the body'. [7]

'Sexually ambiguous bodies are threatening. Perhaps they elicit desire…'

Telling the difference

So how do we determine someone's sex? It's actually far more complex than most people imagine. There are no absolutes in nature, only statistical probabilities. We all begin life with a common anatomy which then differentiates if there is a Y chromosome present. This activates the production of testosterone, appropriate receptors in the brain and the formation of testes. The other features which do not develop remain in the body in vestigial form.

Several factors can be taken into account in determining a person's biological sex. They include chromosomal sex (X and Y, for example); hormonal sex (oestrogen and testosterone); gonadal sex (ovaries and testes); genital sex (vagina and penis, for example); reproductive sex (sperm-carrying and inseminating; gestating and lactating); and other associated internal organs (like the uterus or the prostate).

These factors are not always consistent with each other. In fact science admits everyone falls somewhere along a continuum. But few people would know if they were 100-per-cent male or 100-per-cent female, chromosomally or hormonally, as there are not many cases in everyday practice in which this would be tested. Unless you want to take part in the Olympic Games, that is, in which case you would have to undergo a chromosome sex test, although this has been abandoned as unfair and unreliable by other sports bodies. The British Journal of Sports Medicine claims that one in 500 female athletes and about one in 500 male athletes would fail the chromosome gender test. This is because chromosome variations do not necessarily affect physical appearance. A test might determine an athlete is not a woman for the sake of competition, but that certainly does not make her a man in her everyday life. Other indicators of sex are subject to similar variations. Even the capacity to reproduce is not a clear indicator: some intersex people have had children. The so-called biological line between male and female is frankly quite fuzzy.

So much for sex. But sex is not gender. Sex is biological. Gender is social, cultural, psychological and historical. It is used to describe people and their roles in society, the jobs they do and the way they dress, how they are meant to behave.

A person's gender is usually assigned at birth, with a cursory look at the genitals. The 'boy' or 'girl' which is documented on the birth certificate affects almost everything else that happens to that child socially for the rest of his or her life.

The third gender

Responses to ambiguous genitals vary from culture to culture. But in some societies that do not have access to surgery or whose world view is not mediated by biological 'facts' of science, there is more space for those who don't fit the norm. These children are accepted as a 'third sex' within the social order.

One of the most humane and enlightened approaches was observed in the 1930s among the Native American Navajo people. The Navajo recognized three physical categories: male, female and hermaphrodite or *nadle*. Nadles had a special status, specific tasks and clothing styles, and were often consulted for their wisdom and skills.

In India the *hijra* have a 2,500-year-old history. Known contemporarily as a 'third gender' caste, hijra translates as hermaphrodite or eunuch or 'sacred erotic female-man'. They include intersex people, assigned both as male or female, but also attract to their community a wide range of transvestites, homosexual prostitutes and religious devotees of the Mother Goddess Bahuchara Mata.[8]

Elsewhere, in the Eastern highlands of Papua New Guinea, third-sex people are known as *kwolu-aatmwol* or 'female thing transforming into male thing'.

Under police guard transsexuals take part in Rio's carnival. Attacks on gender 'non-conformists' are common.

J.L. BULCAO / FRANK SPOONER

PETER BARKER / PANOS

In India (above) the *hijra* or 'third gender' caste also attracts eunuchs, transvestites, homosexuals and transsexuals. In the US (below) intersex activism is gaining ground.

Medically they are like the guevedoche in the Dominican Republic. Although in some instances they may be killed at birth, most kwolu-aatmwol are accepted as such and are partially raised in the direction of masculinity. They retain some female elements to their unique identity but this does not prevent them from becoming respected shamans or war leaders.

In most parts of the world, however, powerful taboos operate, underpinning fear and discrimination. Sexually ambiguous bodies are threatening. Perhaps they elicit desire, possessing it might seem an erotic potential beyond those with ordinary genitals. Maybe the notion of sex or gender mutability provokes a kind of terror or gender vertigo.

Whatever the cause, medical professionals and others end up favouring drastic surgical remedies for minor conditions that present no medical or functional dangers.

But what about compassion and faith in the ability of the parents to cope with their own emotional pain and distress about their child's 'imperfection' and to nurture that child despite their difference? What about the rights of the child, especially the right of the child to decide their gender identity, if different from what the experts have designated it to be?

Challenging such rigidity is the Transgender Movement. This is a broad alliance of people who are inclined to cross the gender line. It includes cross-dressers and transvestites as well as intersex people and transsexuals – both those who have and have not had 'gender realignment' surgery.

Transsexuals whose gender identity is in conflict with their birth gender usually want to achieve a congruence of identity, role and anatomy by having sex-reassignment surgery. But increasingly transsexuals are taking the option to be 'out' as transsexual and are deciding against surgery, without compromising their core gender identity. It's simple. Some men don't have penises and have vaginas, some woman have penises and don't have vaginas.

The trend toward gender non-conformity is growing and has come about partly as a result of anger at discrimination, stigmatization, lack of civil rights and a reluctance on the part of the authorities to pursue those who commit hate crimes against non-conformists.

As a transgendered man (female to male transsexual) I do not 'pass' as simply male but am 'out' in order to campaign for non-discrimination and Transgender Pride. I did not choose to be transsexual, nor did I change gender roles in protest against society's oppressive gender system. I did it to achieve an authenticity and outward expression of a deeply abiding sense of myself as a gendered being. During transition I became more fully and truly myself, suspending the symbolic hold society's rules had over my body in order to achieve it. The rigidity of the rules is what is not natural.

There are specific struggles, such as trying to get legal recognition and legal rights in societies where one has to be either male or female. Attitudes are very fixed. In Britain, for example, even post-operative transsexuals are legally padlocked forever to the gender written on their birth certificates, even though this contravenes the European Charter on Human Rights. While in the US, gender non-conformists are still listed in the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.

But those who don't fit the rules are drawing encouragement from information about third-gender identities in other cultures. As this space expands, more transgender and intersex people are opting to live bi-gendered or hybrid gendered lives, choosing hermaphroditic bodies, through surgery, to match their core sense of who they are.

This expansion is not only an issue for intersex or transgender people. It liberates everyone from rigid and stereotypic ways of being masculine and feminine, mixing the best of all for everyone.

Perhaps it will help pave the way to greater gender equality – or better still, irrelevance. ■

Zachary I Nataf is a transgender activist, author of *Lesbians Talk Transgender* (Scarlet Press) and director of the International Transgender Film and Video Festival in London.

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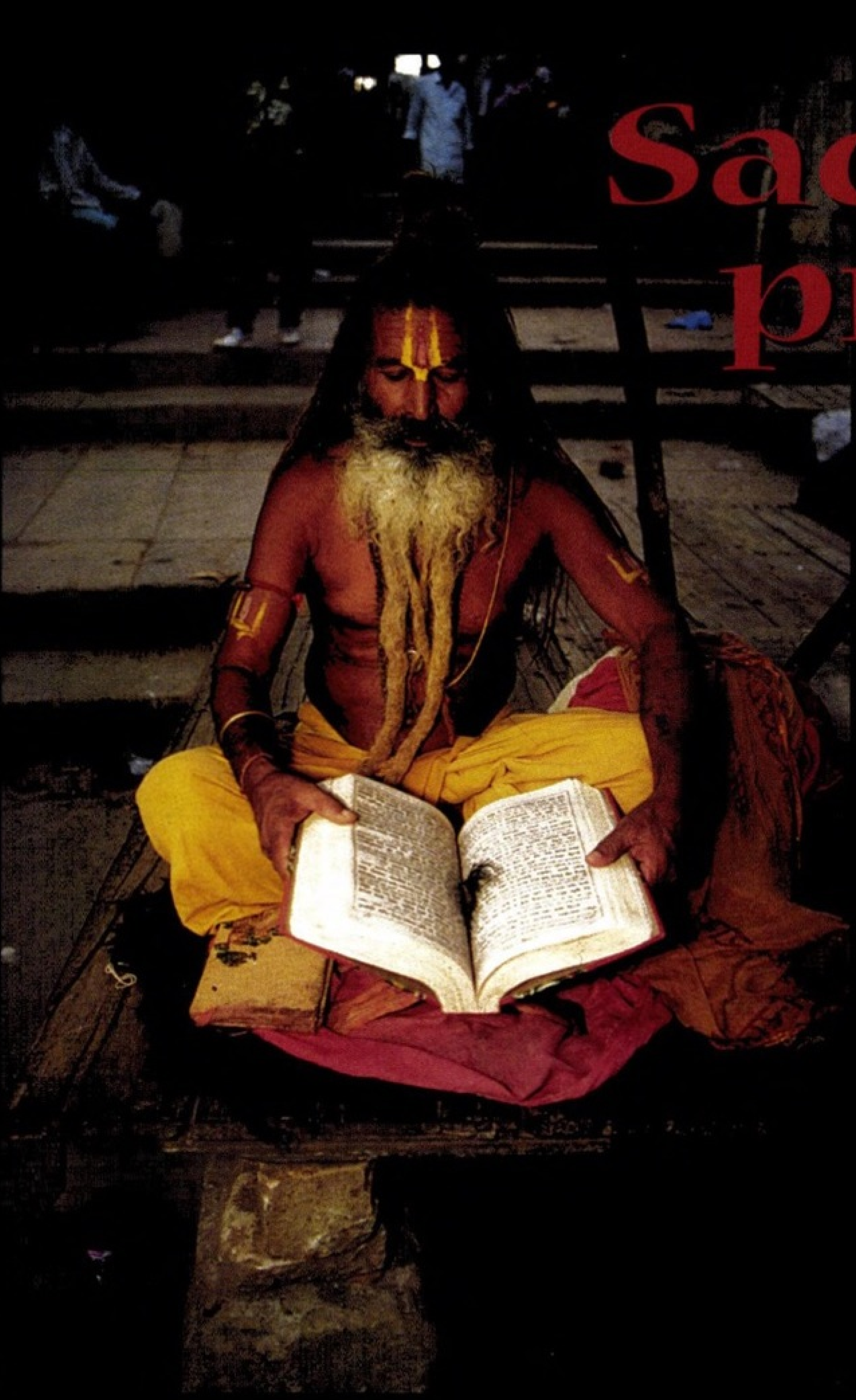
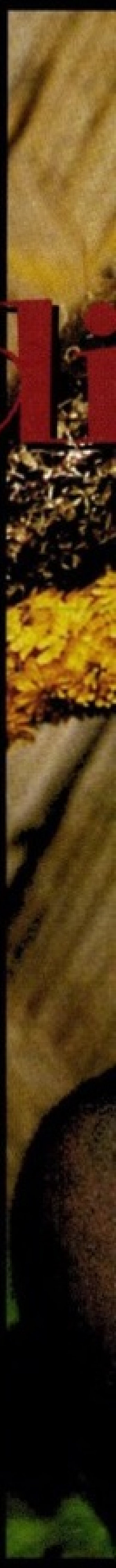
1 *Guevote*, Rolando Sanchez, Fama Film AG, Bern, Switzerland, 1997. **2** Julliane Imperato-McGinley et al, *Androgens and the Evolution of Male Gender Identity Among Male Psuedo-Hermaphrodites*, New England Journal of Medicine, No 300, 1979. **3** Gilbert Herdt, *Third Sex, Third Gender*, Zone Books, NY, 1994. **4** Bo Laurent, *Hermaphrodites with Attitude Quarterly*, Fall/Winter, 1995-96. **5** David Berreby, *Biology will Defeat the Defense of Marriage Act*, SLATE, Internet, 10 September 1996. **6** David Tuller, *Intersexuals begins to Speak Out on Infant Genital Operations*, San Francisco Chronicle, 21 June 1997. **7** Katherine Maurer, *Clinical Psychiatry News*, vol 25, No 7, July 1997. **8** Serena Nanda, *Hijras: An Alternative Sex and Gender Role in India*, in ed. Herdt *Third Sex, Third Gender*, op cit.

Keep Your Scalpels OFF Intersex Kids!!
Hermaphrodites with Attitude
Keep
Bodies!



DAN WHITE / CAMERA PRESS

Sacred and profane bodi



The body is a zone of self expression. The way you use and adorn or decorate your body can express who you are and what you believe in. It is symbolic, communicative, aesthetic. It may be sacred or profane, cultural or individualistic, conformist or creative. For German philosopher Nietzsche the body is 'aesthetic material'; through the body we 'create ourselves as a work of art'.

Sacred denial

An Hindu ascetic or **Sadhu** is physically and ritually separated from the rest of Indian society by bodily symbols. He wears no stitched clothing – only a saffron cloth wrapped around his waist, because nakedness symbolizes the rejection of physical comforts and the transcendence of attachments to the body. In addition, the absence of clothing suggests simplicity, innocence and a state of oneness with nature and all creation. His **jata** or long matted hair and beard symbolize a disregard for the body and sensual pursuits, and convey a sense of rejection of all socially sanctioned conventions and rules of conformity. His forehead is marked in ash with the symbol of his sect – the **Vaishnavas** or worshipper of the god Vishnu – the Great Preserver.

Source: Robert Gross, **The Sadhus of India**, Rawat Publications, Delhi, 1992.

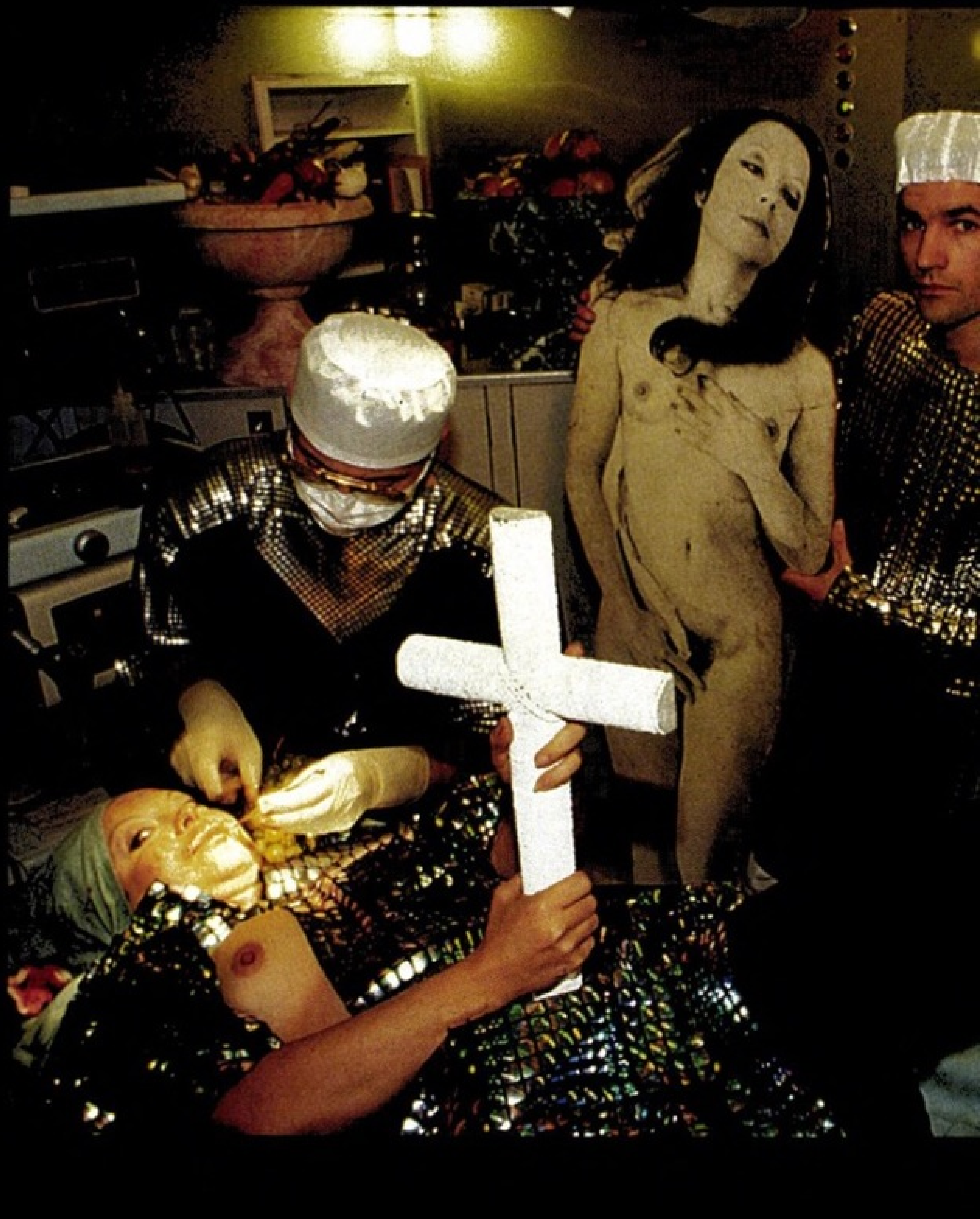
Carnal Art

French artist Orlan is the originator and sole practitioner of Carnal Art. She began in 1990, using computer-generated composites of female Renaissance icons and her face as a template for surgical transformation of her own features.

New medical techniques allow surgeons to perform operations whilst the patient is awake, without the expected penalty of pain. During surgery Orlan considers the operating theatre as her studio, a place where she is consciously directing the production of artwork such as video, photography, reading from psychoanalytic and literary texts and makes live telecommunications.

Orlan likes her body and all the changes she has made to it. She does not change it because she believes it to be inadequate. She has drawn attention to the paradox of modern women who have politically recovered control over their own bodies and have more social freedom as individuals but who appear reluctant to assert this franchise when it comes to personal appearance. They remain conservative in their desires for owning their bodies, fearing rejection and accusations of madness. Orlan, meanwhile, happily contradicts the culturally accepted standards of idealized beauty, replacing these with her own designs, one of which involves constructing a nose of caricature proportions. Her Carnal Art has inspired resistance against stereotypes of aesthetic tyranny. In her own words: 'Are we still persuaded to comply with the decisions of nature? This lottery of genes distributed by chance? My work is against the innate, the inexorable, the program, Nature, DNA and God! My work is blasphemous!'

Source: Papers by Dr Rachel Armstrong, London.



W. STONE / FRANK SPOONER

A cultural cauldron

Body decoration, self adornment or **bilas**, as we say in Papua New Guinea, is a universal form of expression. People all over the world wear a wide range of clothes, put on make-up, wear scarves, sunglasses, masks and hats, tattoo the body or parts of it, attach rings... Bilas is not a thing, not an object. Any meaning associated with it is given to it by its participants. Bilas is defined and practised in accordance with the underlying culture. There are specific colours, designs and patterns, and understood rules and regulations to the actual practice of putting on bilas. In the past 200 years or so, following contact with Europeans, there have been changes in the way people see themselves and their community. Needless to say, bilas and the way it is understood and practised has changed dramatically as a result. Have the various cultures of Papua New Guinea lost their rich and varied traditions of bilas? Are there new forms of bilas? If there are, are they good? Do these new bilas have the same meaning as those before? What do the changes to bilas mean in terms of a group's sense of place and identity? As a Papua New Guinean, these questions are a continual preoccupation, because I am continually engaged in locating myself in a cultural cauldron that is competitive.

Source: Michael A Mel, writing in **Contemporary Art in Papua New Guinea** by Susan Cochrane, Craftsman's House, Sydney 1997.

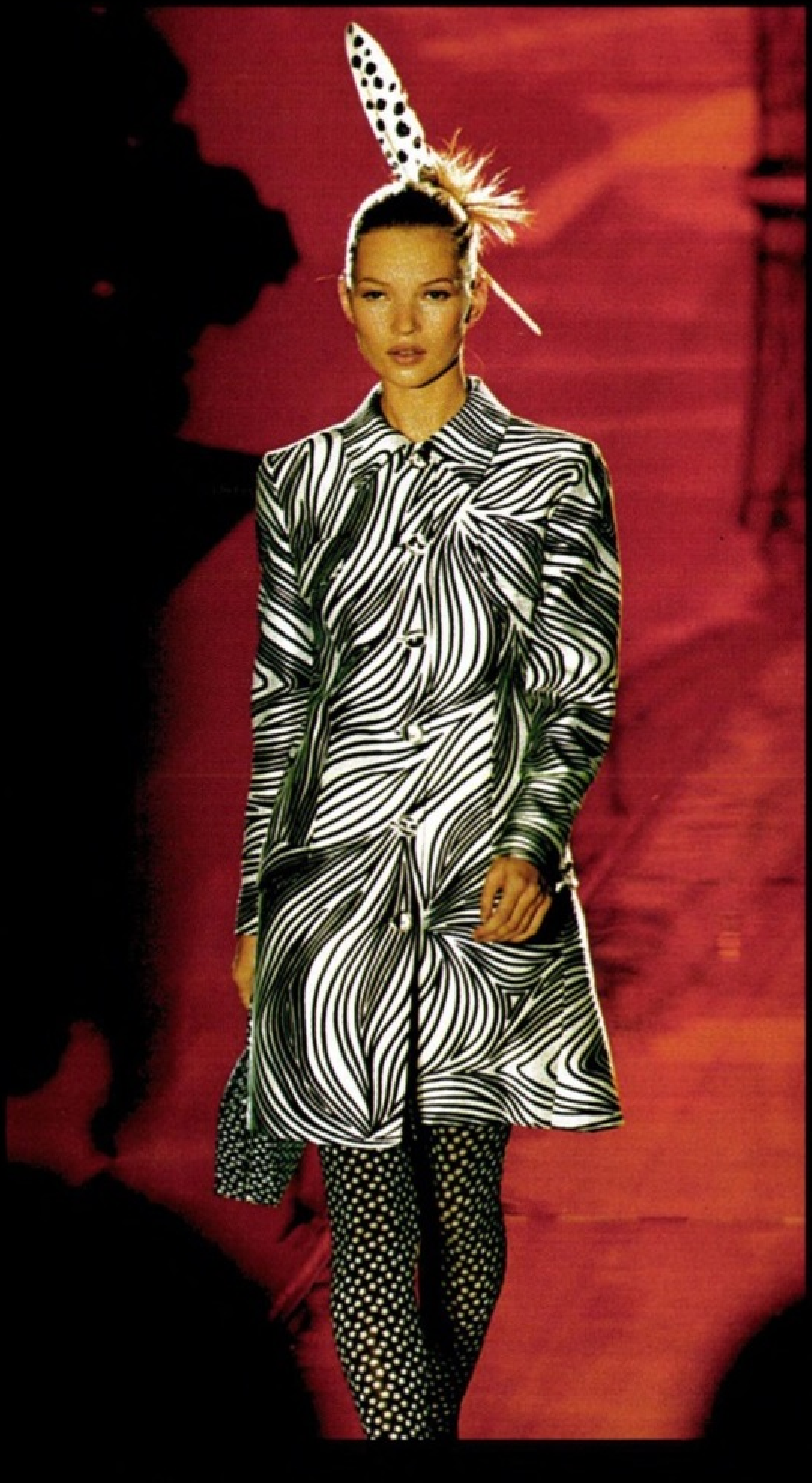
Fashion's tentacles

The growth of the European city in the early stages of mercantile capitalism at the end of the Middle Ages saw the birth of fashion. Fashion is dress in which the key feature is rapid and continually changing style. Fashion in a sense **is** change, and in modern Westernized societies no clothes are outside fashion; even nuns have shortened their skirts; even the poorest wear cheap versions of the fashions that went out a few years ago... There is no escape from fashion. The determinedly **un**fashionable wear clothes that manifestly represent a reaction against what is in fashion. And the most dowdy clothes may at any moment get taken up and become, perversely, all the rage.

Constantly changing, fashion produces only conformity, as the outrage of the never-before-seen modulates into the good manners of the faultlessly and self-effacingly correct. To dress fashionably is both to stand out and to merge into the crowd, to lay claim to the exclusive and to follow the herd. Fashion links beauty, success and the city. It was always urban, became metropolitan and is now cosmopolitan, boiling all national and regional differences down to the distilled moment of glassy sophistication, masking all emotions save that of triumph. The demeanour of the fashionable person must always be blasé – cool. Yet fashion does not negate emotion, it simply displaces it into the realm of aesthetics. It can be a way of intellectualizing visually about individual desires and social aspirations. Enmeshed as it is in mass-consumption, Western fashion has now overrun large parts of the so-called Third World, although national dress might be better adapted to climate and conditions.

Source : Elizabeth Wilson from **Adorned in Dreams**, Virago, London 1985.

ANDRE DHOME / REX FEATURES



BEN COSTER / CAMERA PRESS

Of human bon

Most of us sell our bodies in some way or another. **Jeremy Seabrook** traces the global intricacies and extremes of that bondage.

THE streets of Dhaka are thronged with cycle-rickshaws – metal-framed structures with a folding canopy to protect from rain and sun, painted with bright motifs of flowers and birds. On their back panels are usually scenes from a Bengali film or an idealized landscape. Sometimes the vehicles get jammed in the streets, to form a tangle of metal that seems to move as a single composite vehicle.

The drivers are mostly migrants. They strain every muscle as they pedal; their bodies glisten with sweat; all are skinny, some wasted. Many suffer from TB. Some survive a working life into middle age. A few, stringy, emaciated, resolute, with silver stubble on their cheeks, continue against all the odds into their fifties.

This is free labour. No-one is forcing them to sell their efforts in this way. No individual compels them to rent the vehicle each day, so that the first two hours of work yield nothing for them. No-one forces them to undertake work which will use more energy than the food they consume can replace. But these bodies are all that stand between their dependants – children, wives, elderly parents, those too sick to work – and a destitution without remedy, as the defeated bodies wrapped in shabby blankets and lying motionless on the sidewalk or in Ramna Park, testify.

Elsewhere, in Madhya Pradesh, Central India, Sudhu Ram tells how, at the age of 18, he inherited his father's bondage. When the forests were felled, the tribals lost their only form of subsistence and had no choice but to take loans from landlords. They could not pay back even quite small sums, since the rate of interest exceeded their earnings. In any case, they were paid in rice, not money. Sudhu Ram went into the landlord's fields when he was nine to look after the cattle. During the growing season he would wash the animals and feed them while the adults worked in the fields. This is bonded labour. Sudhu Ram was freed from bondage in 1988.

But there are still at least five million bonded labourers in India, even though bondage is against the Constitution. Bondage has now been 'modernized'; a loan is taken, and work must be given in exchange, though for a more limited period. People need a loan for a marriage or to pay for medicine. They then become bonded to the moneylender for a limited period – three or five years – and during that period their labour remains entirely at his disposal. One condition of the loan is that if anyone should inquire they must say that they are free labourers in receipt of wages.

On the other side of the world, in Germany, a young woman begins her night's work. Forcing her way through the tourists and sightseers, she takes up her position on the podium, beneath the strobe lights, holding the chrome pole, hoping to attract the attention of the foreign punters. The client pays the bar to take her off, to do what he pleases. He has rented her body for the night. If she comes to work late she will be fined. If she goes with too few customers she will be dismissed. If she fails the compulsory medical test and is found to be HIV-positive, she will be thrown out. This is free labour.

Another woman, Noy, was lured to Germany with a promise of work. Once

SHAHIDUL ALAM / DRIK

ndage

there, she was sold to a brothel. She was deemed to have incurred the expense of the journey and was charged interest on her travel costs. Her passport was confiscated, she was not allowed to go unaccompanied out of the brothel. She received no wages. Only through a customer who took pity on her did she gain her release. She was then deported as an illegal alien. Her abductors were not touched. This is bonded labour.

Economic necessity which drives people to sell the only thing they have – their body and its labour-power – is regarded as freedom; when an individual coerces them to work, it is bonded labour and regarded as unfreedom.

But the borderline between the two is imprecise. Is a woman, man or child, driven by hunger and destitution to take work that is damaging and injurious to the body, more free than one who is compelled by another individual to labour for the barest subsistence? For allegedly free labourers in the global economy such distinctions are increasingly academic.

Slavery, the traffic in human bodies, is always in the process of being renewed in one form or another. In the contemporary world it is present not only in the sex trade but also in the commerce in domestic labour to the Gulf, labour on the Brazilian plantations, the cargoes of Bangladeshi or Indonesian workers arriving at airports in South Asia, dressed in the identical livery of some recruitment company, with name-tags round their necks.

Free labour merges imperceptibly with slavery; work becomes servitude; livelihood is transformed into strange new forms of bondage. And the labour market is the invisible global bazaar where survival – life itself – is traded for work.

To whom do the bodies of the people belong? Who controls the bodies of the row of young men in the gay club in Pattaya, Thailand, who masturbate competitively for a hatful of money donated by an audience of Americans and Japanese? Who owns the eyes and fingers of the women labourers in the electronics factories in the Free Trade Zones? Who commands the youth and energy of the young women in the garment factories of Dhaka and Ho Chi Minh City?

Consuming bodies

These are not idle questions, and should be asked not only of the bodies of the poor. Who, indeed, controls the bodies of the privileged? In recent years the dead in the West have ceased to decay as fast as they did earlier because of all the additives and preservatives they have consumed in their diet; embalmed in advance, in the interests of vast food conglomerates.

Here is another element in the exploitation of the body. The most lucrative, the most profitable cash crop in the world is human beings; the great harvest of the generations, whose vigour, strength and energy are driven to market. Now they are required for making ships or clothes; now for slaughter in wars to defend homelands against enemies, real or imagined; now for slave labour on sugar, tea or rubber plantations; now as sinks for the consumer goods of the world.

There are such opportunities for profit in the body: gold, jewels, diamonds for facial, hand and arm ornaments, the use of studs, crystals, rings in nose, ears, eyebrows, nipples, penis. There are such rich pickings in the manipulation of identity, be it for those who want surgery to look like someone else, or those seeking to defeat time with anti-ageing creams. And the cosmetics industry with its shampoos of elderberry and jojoba, its facials of cucumber and wild herbs, its body-mousse of strawberries and avocado, purports to apply to our body a freshness and purity which has long ago disappeared from what we eat.

The most profitable cash crop in the world is human beings

Consumption mirrors, mimics and mocks the severities of labour. It is driven by the same compulsions, the same economic necessities, the same inescapable rigours and rhythms of an industrialization without end. The role of the consumer is to turn the body into an absorber of more and more industrial products, denatured but more expensive foods, medicines and remedies.

Our bodies, the bodies of an industrialized humanity, are for sale. The most extreme examples. which provoke such horror – prostitution, forced labour, bondage – are only the more florid examples of practices that are commonplace in the global economy.

At the most brutal level, women stand at the traffic lights in a Third World city, holding out babies and making gestures of hunger to those stalled in vehicles while the fumes swirl around them like an

Driven by economic necessity to sell the only thing they have – their bodies – women in a Filipino brothel await clients.

PETER BARKER / PANOS

RON GILING / PANOS

A global commodity: migrant workers wait to sell their labour in Shanghai.

infernal fog. Three microcephalic children sit on a piece of sacking in Marine Drive in Mumbai; a man with elephantiasis extends his swollen legs and cups his hand in supplication; the most terrible existential misfortunes become livelihood.

The body is both the agent and the object of our survival. Our labour-power is the only means whereby a majority of humankind can sustain our physical being, our existence and identity.

While, in the global market-place, intensification of labour takes an ever-greater toll of the bodies of the poor, at the same time the bodies of consumers must be pampered and protected more than ever before, so that they will go on serving as consumers of industrial products of the future. Thus we see bodies wasted from insufficiency and overwork on the one hand and, at the same time, bodies bloated and wasted by excess and all the sicknesses of hyperconsumption.

The dependency of the rich upon the labour of the poor has always led them to despise those whose energies they use up. Manual labour is always looked down upon, precisely because it is indispensable. 'These people are crooks,' cries the employer of servants in a smart colony of Manila. 'They will pick your bones clean, they will leave you with nothing.'

At the same time, a fascination with the bodies of the poor has always characterized class-divided societies. For example, Emile Zola's fascination, in his novels, with working- class women; the obsession of DH Lawrences's Lady Chatterley with her gamekeeper; the desire of imperial functionaries to possess the allegedly 'sexually uninhibited' women of the 'native quarter'; or Oscar Wilde's hankering after the street-boys of late Victorian London. Contemporary echoes of this may be seen in sex tourism to the Third World.

The bodies of rich and poor have always been destined to different purposes. The former, more sensitive, must be shielded and cherished against the rigours of life, sickness, ageing and hard work. The bodies of the poor, however, are worn out in the task of preserving those of higher castes, élites and ruling classes.

This model has been globalized with growing economic integration. But the sharp distinction between workers and consumers has now been blurred, since more and more people are both.

This is not necessarily liberating: it may just be a double bind.

The body remains the most basic element of our humanity, and the means of exploiting it have multiplied as the world has grown richer. To the age-old exploitation of the bodies of the labouring poor are now added new possibilities of making profit from the body's appetites, its needs, anxieties and insecurities. Whether it be hard labour or over-consumption, the bodies of both privilege and oppression are, in one way or another, the site of perpetual struggle. ■

Jeremy Seabrook is a writer and broadcaster and regular contributor to the **NI**. He is currently working on a book on sexuality in India.

ACTION on The Body

The following groups campaign on issues covered in this magazine:

Human organs traffic *(page 14)*
Amnesty International offices AOTEAROA/NZ: PO Box 793, Wellington. Tel: +64 4 499 3349. **AUSTRALIA:** PO Box 1611, Broadway NSW 2037. Tel: +61 2 9281 4188. **BRITAIN:** 1 Easton Street, London. WC1X ODJ. Tel: +44 171 833 1771. **CANADA:** 401-214 Montreal Rd, Vanier, Ontario. K1L 1A4. Tel: +1 613 744 7667. e-mail: info@amnesty.ca **US:** 322 Eighth Avenue, 10th floor, New York. NY 10001. Tel: +1 212 807 8400.

Transgender *(page 22)*
INTERNATIONAL: *Internet news groups:* **transgen@brownum.brown.edu** e-mail: subscribe transgen (your name) send to listserv-@brownum.brown.edu *WWW site:* **http://rniles.pnw.net/transgen.html AOTEAROA/NZ: New Zealand Gender Dysphoria Foundation**, PO Box 2827, Auckland. **AUSTRALIA: Transgender Liberation Coalition**, PO Box 208, Kings Cross, NSW 2011. Tel: +61 2 358 5664. **BRITAIN: The Gender Trust**, BM Gentrust, London WC1N 3XX. Tel: +44 1305 269222. **CANADA: Zenith Foundation**, Box 46, 8415 Granville Street, Vancouver, BC V6P 4Z9. Tel: +1 604 261 1695. **US: Intersex Society of North America,** PO Box 31791, San Francisco, CA 94131. **Transexual Menace:** c/o Gender Identity Project, Lesbian and Gay Community Sevices Centre, 208 West 13th St, New York, NY 10011. Tel: +1 212 6207310.

Labour *(page 28)*
INTERNATIONAL: Anti-Slavery International, Thomas Clarkson House, The Stableyard, Broomgrove Rd, London SW9 9TL, Britain. Tel: +44 171 924 9555. Fax: +44 171 738 4110. e-mail: antislavery@gn.apc.org **International Labour Office**, 4 Rue des Morillons, CH-1211, Geneva 22, Switzerland. Tel: +41 22 7996 111.

Genetics *(page 20)*
AUSTRALIA: Australian GeneEthics Network, 340 Gore St, Fitzroy, Vic 3065, Melbourne. Tel: +61 3 9416 222. Fax: +61 3 9416 0767. **BRITAIN: The Genetics Forum**, 3rd floor, 5-11 Worship St, London EC2 2BH. Tel: +44 171 638 0606. Fax: 628 0817. e-mail: geneticforum@gn.apc.org **CANADA: Cultural Survival Canada,** 200 Isabella St, Suite 304, Ottawa, ON K15 IV7. Tel : +44 613 237 5361. Fax: +44 613 237 1547. e-mail: csc@web.apc.org **US: Council for Responsible Genetics**, 5 Upland Rd, Suite 3, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02140. Tel: +1 617 868 0870. Fax: +1 617 491 5344.

Disability *(page 12)*
AOTEAROA/NZ: Disabled Persons Assembly, PO Box 27-524, 6035 NZ Tel: +64 4 8019100. Fax: +64 4 8019565 **AUSTRALIA: DPI Australia**, PO Box 170, Curtin ACT 2605. Tel: +61 6 282 3025. Fax: +61 6 282 3800. **BRITAIN: British Council of Organizations of Disabled People**, Litchurch Plaza, Litchurch Lane, Derbyshire, DE24 8AA. Tel: +44 1332 295551. Fax: +44 1332 295580. e-mail: jenny@bcodp.demon.co.uk **CANADA: Council of Canadians with Disabilities,** Somerset Building 926-294, Portage Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3C OB9. Tel: +1 204 947 0303. **US:** World Institute on Disability, 510 16th St, Suite 100, Oakland, CA 94704. Tel: +1 510 841 4776.

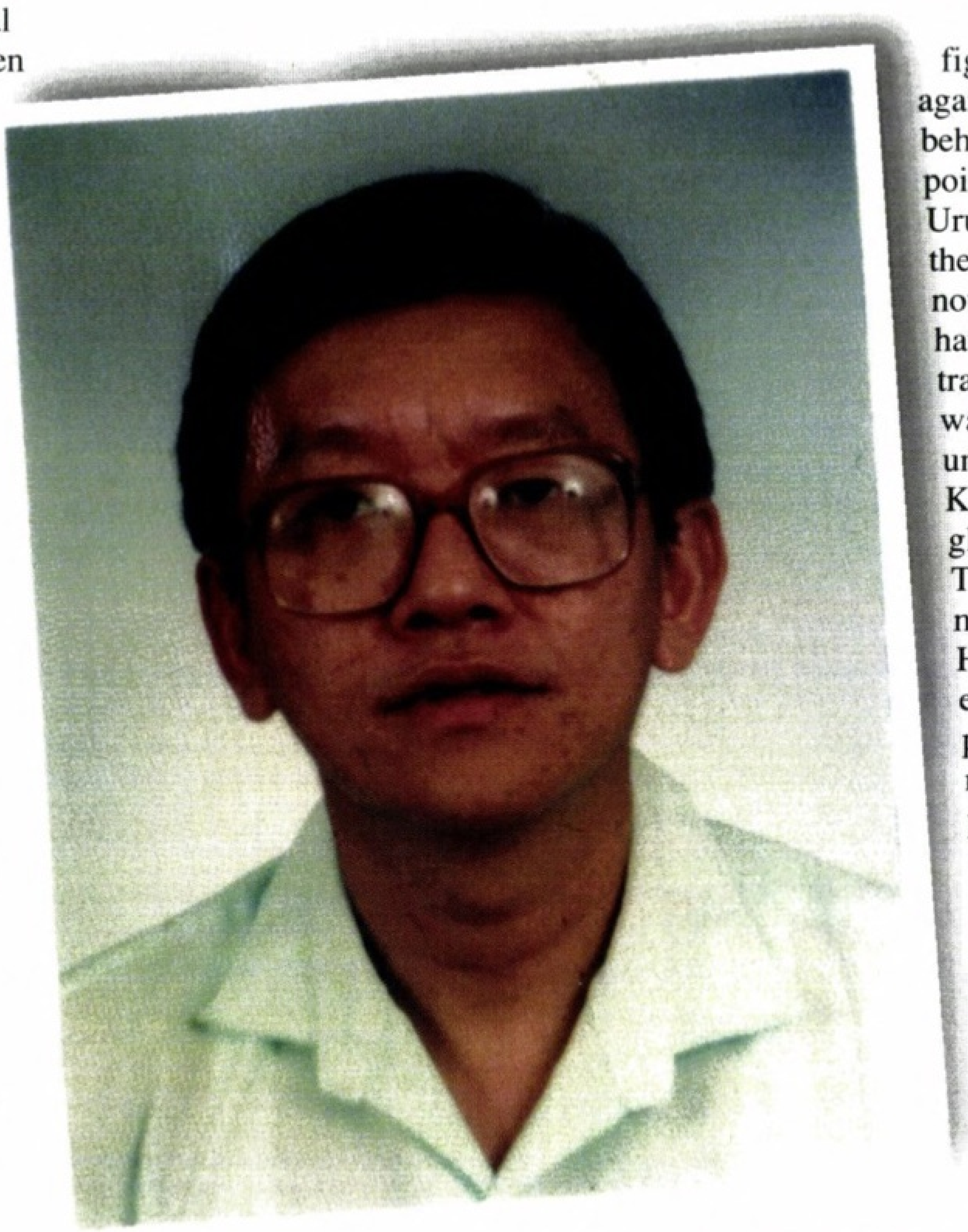
The NI Interview

Martin Khor

Murray MacAdam in Toronto catches up with a key member of a group of Southern intellectual activists who are mounting a challenge to the tidal wave of globalist modernization.

THE smiles come easily, even at the end of a long day. A sense of warm civility surrounds Martin Khor. Yet it's evident that here is a tireless campaigner for rewriting the rules of the game in favour of the Third World. I've caught up with him during an international forum on globalization.

If there's one thing that sparks passion out of this gentle Malaysian, it's the trendy form of colonialism known as globalization. He helped alert activists worldwide to the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) when few people knew about it. He rails against global tobacco companies who aggressively market cigarettes in the Third World, at a cost of an expected seven million deaths by the year 2010. 'If this is not genocide, I don't know what is,' he says angrily.



Khor's militancy is backed up by solid research and analysis, which helped the organization he heads – Third World Network – to win the 1996 Award for South-South Co-operation from the G7 (most industrialized) nations. The Network links groups and individuals to promote the needs of Third World peoples, including fair distribution of the world's resources, and development which is ecologically sustainable and meets human needs.

His interests stretch far beyond globalization to embrace a gamut of concerns. Indeed, the range of topics written about and advocated by Martin Khor reads like a listing of *New Internationalist* issue themes: primary health care, North-South dialogue, biopiracy, structural adjustment, genetic engineering, sustainable development.

Environmental protection is first and foremost. 'Being brought up in Penang, one almost naturally becomes an environmentalist,' says Khor. 'It's a beautiful island, with lovely beaches and hills. When "development" began to pollute the seas and plans for hotels threatened the ambience of the hills, many local people like me became activists.' Khor is a founding member of Friends of the Earth Malaysia.

That love for nature, coupled with a visceral dislike for 'the materialistic rat-race', helped shape Khor's philosophical vision. Learning about colonialism in university, and how political independence did little to soften economic exploitation, deepened his commitment to social activism. Khor helped form the Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP), which blended global analysis with practical activities to help consumers, farmers and fisherfolk on local issues. CAP later helped launch the Third World Network, which maintains a blend of local and global concerns in its work.

These days Khor pours much of his talents as a writer, economist and advocate into the globalization issue. 'We have to strip the myths about globalization being about efficiency and serving consumers' interests,' he insists. 'We should define "efficiency" and "productivity" according to the criteria of our objectives. If these are job creation, environmental protection and social justice, then globalization is a very inefficient instrument. It destroys jobs through corporate downsizing and new technologies, damages the environment and widens inequities.'

Khor knows what he and others fighting global corporate rule are up against. He knows too that the forces behind globalization are powerful, pointing to their success through the Uruguay Round of trade negotiations, the World Trade Organization and now the MAI. All these initiatives have opened more doors for transnational corporations (TNCs) to walk into Third World countries unhindered. On the other hand, notes Khor, the backlash against globalization is spreading among Third World NGOs, peoples' movements and local communities. He takes heart from these resistance efforts in the face of corporate power, making clear his own modesty. 'All these brave, ordinary people are the real heroes of democracy and sustainable development.'

It's these links with activists and citizens' groups across the world that have sparked a vision, one that energizes him for the challenges ahead. 'We need a new kind of citizen politics, including the workers, the women, indigenous people, across nations, that can take control of politics so people can take control of the corporations.' A renewed forcefulness builds in Khor's voice. 'We the people have to create a framework so corporations can meet our needs, and not the other way around. Globalization is not inevitable. It's not made in heaven or hell.' But he adds with a mischievous smile, 'Although I think those who made it should go to hell.'

Beneath the activist passion there's still a warmth. Despite the fatigue from this late-night event capping a gruelling Canadian itinerary, Khor's face lights up when a Malaysian student approaches him to thank him for his speech.

Khor admits that it's tempting to ease off his punishing schedule and lead a less hectic life. 'But there are so many new crises, like this unexpected financial turmoil in Asia, or horrible new initiatives, such as the Multilateral Agreement on Investment, which if we do not fight now, we will have to work much harder later to overcome. Third World Network's great hope is that we can get enough groups in the South and North to work together to change public opinion in the North so the political leaders there will give up their present servitude to the TNCs and their aggression towards the South, and our nations can be more democratic and fulfil people's needs.' ■

Murray MacAdam is a journalist and NGO worker in Toronto.

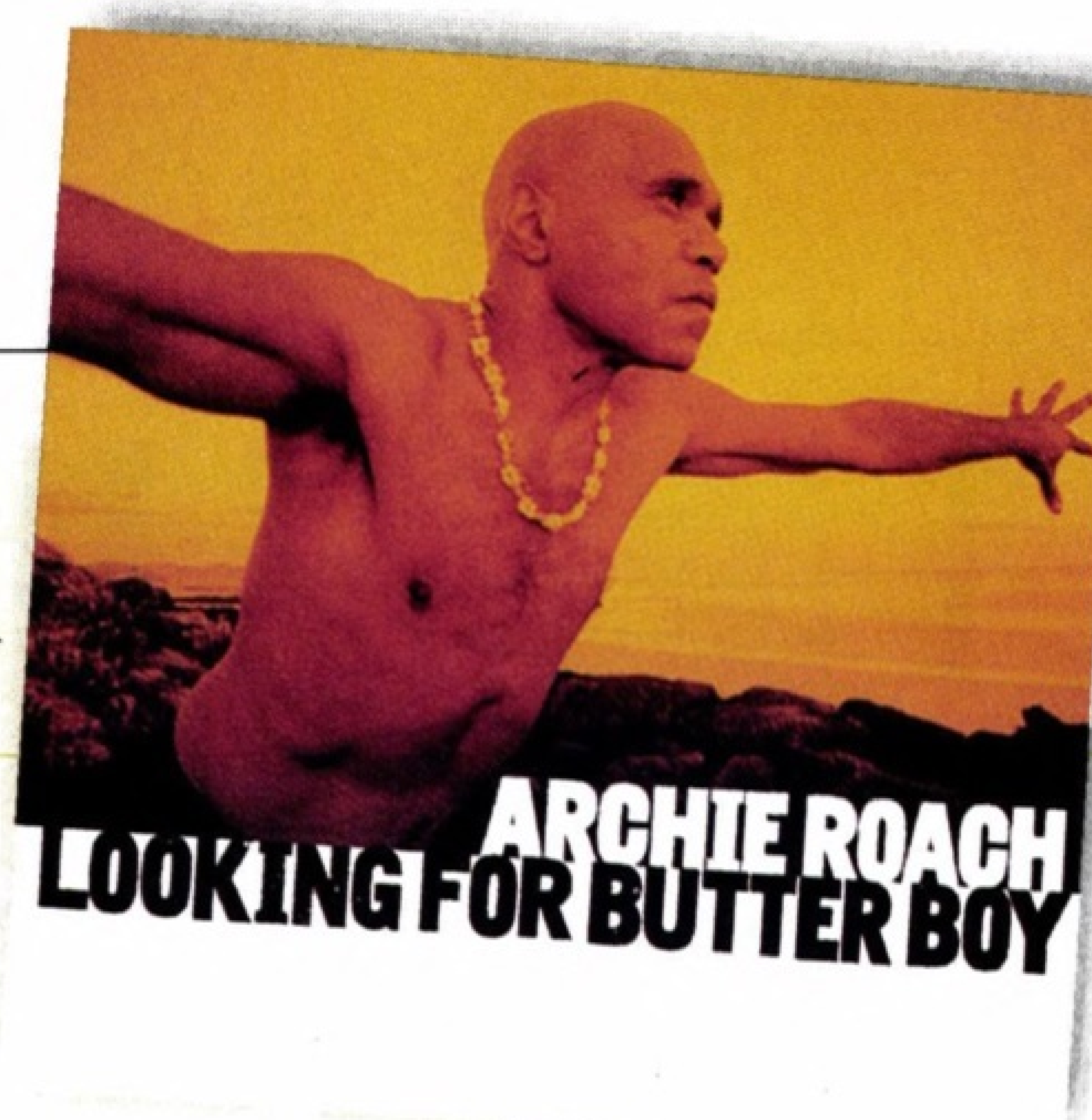
Reviews

music

Looking For Butter Boy

by **Archie Roach**

(Mushroom, MUSH 15CD0)



It's hard to know where to begin with Archie Roach's music. **Looking For Butter Boy** is the native Australian's third album and it's certainly not in the music or its manifest merits that any difficulties lie: Roach has established himself as a powerful and lucid singer, comparable with Neil Young and Ben Harper. Rather, it has something to do with the sweetness with which he approaches a subject matter of desperate sadness. The cause, one might say, of his own music.

Looking For Butter Boy really only has one subject. Roach's songs refer constantly to the ideas of mother, of earth, of brothers and children. Literally and symbolically, they are songs about belonging, sung – as perhaps they only can be – by someone who is an outsider. *Charcoal Lane*, Roach's debut album released in 1990, introduced this theme quite clearly. In 'Took The Children Away' Roach described how he, as a three-year-old boy, and his siblings had been taken forcibly from their parents to be resettled with white Australian families. No further contact was allowed. This brutal activity, discontinued only in the 1960s, was part of federal policy to assimilate the aboriginal populations. In addition to centuries of systematic extermination and suppression of native peoples and their cultures, it is responsible now for the plight of many of Australia's native citizens. **Looking For Butter Boy** is suffused with memories. The singer has spoken of his music originating in his dislocated upbringing. He ranges from the jaunty reggae inflections in 'Beggar Man', to the blues of 'Reach for You' to the rockier attacks of 'Djabugai Lady'. It's fine, compelling music which draws the listener in, although nothing in the steady rhythms or light arrangements can ever prepare one for songs of such deprivation and loss. 'My mother's heart is beating somewhere in the earth,' Roach sings in 'Mother's Heartbeat', and one can't help but be bowled over by the way Roach draws her breath into a greater, if ambiguous, symbol in which either the heart beats for ever or the entire world mourns. The extraordinary aspect of **Looking For Butter Boy** is, ultimately, in the lack of bitterness. Although an album predicated on the most personal of stories, it is open to other losses – Roach simply touches a chord. This album is an astonishing communication and it's salutary that something replete with such humanity could arise from such inhumane beginnings.

Politics ☆☆☆☆

Entertainment ☆☆☆☆ LG

books

Night, Again

Contemporary Fiction from Vietnam

edited by **Linh Dinh**.

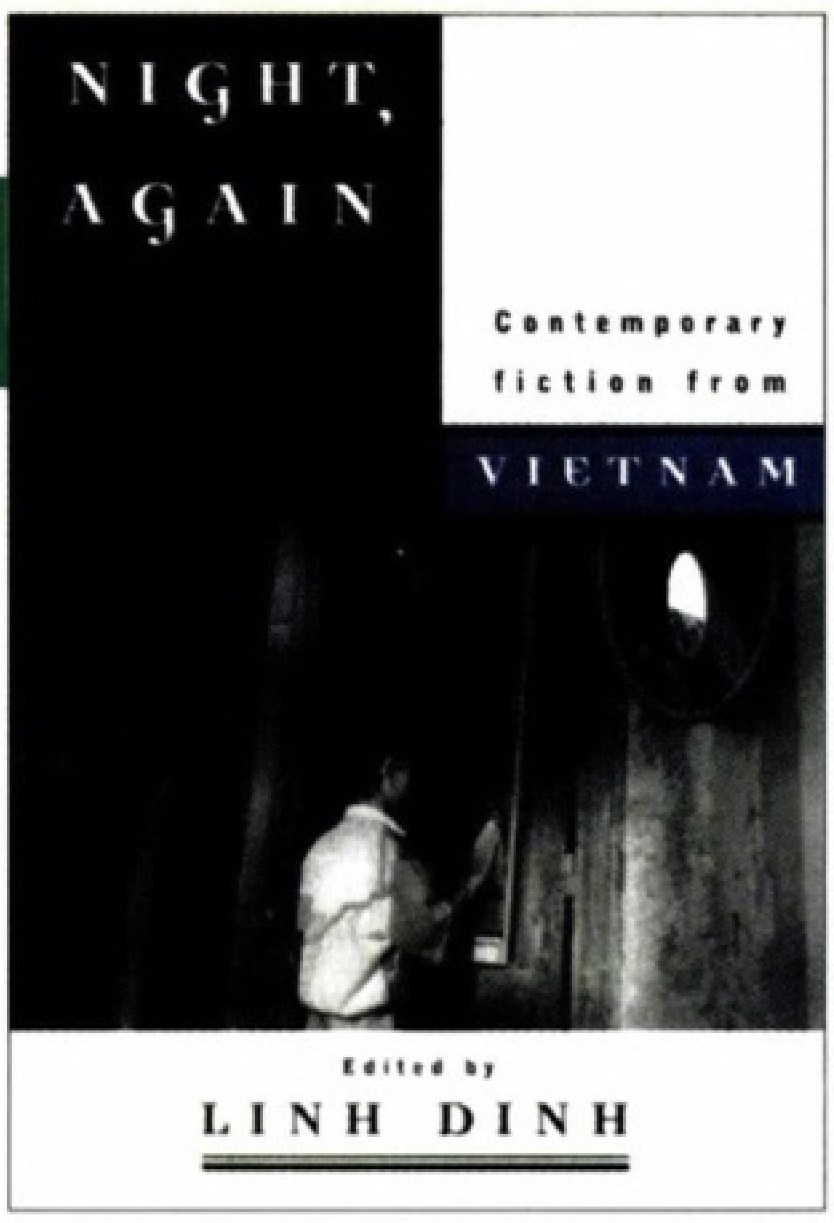
(Seven Stories Press, New York, ISBN 1-888363-07-X)

A Land of Stone and Thyme

An Anthology of Palestinian Short Stories

edited by **Nur** and **Abdelwahab Elmessiri**

(Quartet Books, London, ISBN 0-7043-7092-1)



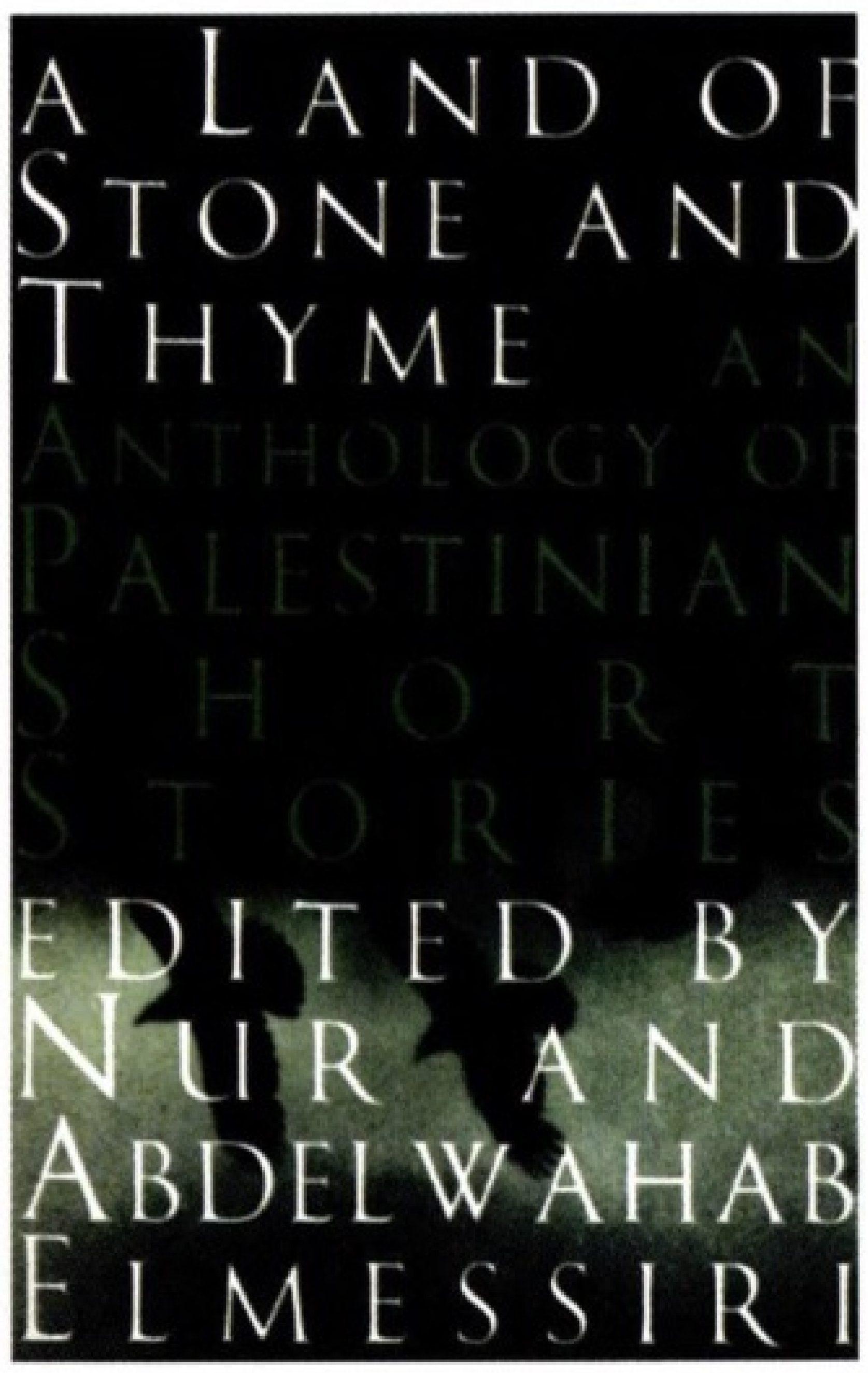
Most fiction in English about Vietnam has been about America's war – with the exception of Bao Ninh's widely read *The Sorrow of War*. The bare plot of Ninh's story in this collection, **Night, Again**, is almost clichéd. A woman looks after a sick soldier; maybe they are in love. During a bombing raid they lose each other. The story is a lament for the acts of kindness and love that come to nothing, but also an acceptance of the irrevocable. Duong Thu Huong, imprisoned for seven months in 1991 for advocating democratic reforms, tells a similarly meditative tale about a student who dumps the girl who looks after him. A futile romantic liaison is as optimistic as these stories get. They present a world of squalid motives and exploitation of others for material gain or, at best, survival. A beggar hires a baby, neglects it. It dies. A couple's plan to kill off a parent goes wrong. They're left to look after a bedridden victim. This is a vivid literature of disenchantment and fracture, of Vietnam's version of *glasnost*, 'Doi Moi' or 'Renovation'; the flipside of the 'canned cheeriness' and sanctioned subjects of the formerly proscribed Socialist Realism.

Politics ☆☆

Entertainment ☆☆☆☆

In **A Land of Stone and Thyme**, by contrast, social isolation is aberrant. These stories are drenched in a sense of common identity in the Palestinians' loss of their land, their autonomy, and of their refusal to concede. A peasant, notified that his land now belongs to the Israeli state, continues to go off to his fields as he always has. In another story the population of a youth's village is expelled at gun-point. He escapes and feels reborn, joyous at being alive and equal to anything that can happen. The stories often use a common fund of Palestinian, Arab and Qur'anic tradition and fable, but they remain accessible. Their subjects are easy to identify with as ordinary, thinking, feeling and suffering human beings, ensnared in the everyday consequences of national catastrophe. What is perhaps most surprising is the absence of malice toward the occupier, who though only a background figure, determines much of the narrative.

Ironically and exceptionally two stories by Ghassan Kanafani, assassinated by Mossad, portray from an Israeli point of view the 'otherness' of a Bedouin shepherd and the thoughts of a border soldier who has indiscriminately fired at people. Death is a constant presence but not the final word. A man who is dead emerges from his grave. A boy spins a fable that demonstrates that his missing father will return. This is not tendentious or sectarian fiction but one that, as if in passing, reveals an involuntary and undying need to live without molestation. This should more seriously disturb any opponent of Palestinian self-determination.


A LAND OF STONE AND THYME
AN ANTHOLOGY OF PALESTINIAN SHORT STORIES
EDITED BY NUR AND ABDELWAHAB ELMESSIRI

Politics ☆☆☆

Entertainment ☆☆☆☆

ML

I Have Lived Here Since the World Began

An Illustrated History of Canada's Native People

by **Arthur J Ray**

(Lester/Key Porter, Toronto, ISBN 1-895555-94-9)

The history of aboriginal peoples in Canada has usually been told by archaeologists and anthropologists from a Eurocentric perspective. In this book historian Arthur J Ray seeks to balance this limited viewpoint. He rejects the tags of 'wise environmentalist', 'noble spiritualist' or 'heathen savage', focusing rather on aboriginal economics, patterns of migration, trade and warfare. Indigenous people are portrayed as active participants in a still-evolving partnership – albeit one now gone horribly awry, in which land has been stolen and the struggle to regain it persists. Far from being dependants rather than contributors to the so-called public purse, indigenous peoples have paid their dues several times over – a point which Ray amply illustrates.

I Have Lived Here Since the World Began is a chronological overview of 12,000 years of history – in 398 pages. It is not an easy read. The writing can be dull and there are times when the author's compression of material makes uninviting reading. This is alleviated, however, by some wonderful colour reproductions of contemporary Native Canadian art.

Since Ray does show a sensitivity to indigenous reality – his research included consultation with aboriginal historians – it is disappointing that he chooses to open the book with a regurgitation of the Bering Strait 'land bridge' theory which claims aboriginals are migrants too. Aboriginal people believe they have always been in North America. But this idea terrifies most non-aboriginal Canadians because it messes with the *terra nullius* fiction they have created to justify their peculiar colonial brand of Social Darwinism. Ray's Eurocentrism casts a disturbing shadow over the admittedly solid scholarship that follows and the book's title is painfully at odds with the map on page three with its large arrow pointing somewhere back to Siberia.

Politics ☆☆☆☆

Entertainment ☆☆☆ SM

STAR RATING

Excellent	☆☆☆☆☆
Very good	☆☆☆☆
Good	☆☆☆
Fair	☆☆
Poor	☆

John Akomfrah

...being the director who combines politics and a mystical feeling for film.

JOHN AKOMFRAH agreed to an interview at the British Film Institute, where he is currently editing his latest film *Speak Like A Child*. When I arrived he greeted me with a smile and we started chatting about Cuba, the Latin American Film Festival, the work of Cuban film-makers and the Revolution. He spoke warmly of the first Film Festival in Havana, ten years ago, where movie-makers discussed the politics of their work and Cuba was as much a reality as a symbol of an alternative way of looking at the world.

An hour later I hadn't even started recording, he had to go back to the editing and we arranged another meeting. We hadn't spoken at all about his own films but I was left with a sense of the power of Akomfrah's concerns and memories which are at the heart of his work. Our second meeting further revealed a feeling for film-making that verges on the mystical.

John Akomfrah was a founding member of Black Audio Films, a production collective set up in 1982 to deal specifically with legitimizing black voices and concerns. It defined its own editorial policy on the basis of black cultural and political agendas.

His first film, *Handsworth Songs*, was a documentary about the Brixton riots in 1985. The early 1980s in Britain were a turbulent period of riots and civil disorders of all kinds but the mainstream media seemed fully to misunderstand the underlying causes. 'We saw a connection,' Akomfrah explains, 'between the events of 1985 and events 30 years earlier, when the parents of the kids who were now rioting came off the boat at Southampton Docks. We tried to provide the urban unrest with a memory and a history. Television is very amnesiac.'

In the 1980s most black film-makers were part of a collective or workshop as a cultural and political option in order to explore certain themes. Akomfrah went on to direct numerous documentaries and feature films, such as, *Testament*, *Who Needs a Heart?*, *A Touch of the Tar Brush*, *Seven Songs for Malcolm X* and *Martin Luther King – Days of Hope*. He has been profoundly influenced by film-makers who were religious or spiritual, from Tarkovsky to Bergman, Bresson to Giaubert Rocha.

But, he says, he has a kind of love-hate relation with religious iconography. 'With *Seven Songs for Malcolm X*, I thought we could speak through the image, the icon, because most people never met him in his life and he came to us as a sanctified image, while people remember King for his legacy,' he says. The religious elements in both films are reflected in very different ways. *Seven Songs For Malcolm X* takes the form of a classic tableau, from which various black personalities and members of his family present a range of perspectives on Malcolm X. The documentary on Martin Luther King is more of a journey through light and darkness, which functions as a metaphor for King's different stages in US politics and the Black struggle. Akomfrah explains that the use of lighting in the film was 'a way of unmasking his life. I wanted to find a way of making the emotional undercurrent of the film transparent to the viewer without using a voice-over.' This ability to let the subject dictate the visual form of the film has proved, throughout his films, his endless capacity for finding new ways to tell a story.

Akomfrah has also been influenced by the New Latin American cinema of the 1960s, the Europeans Antonioni and Godard, and the Indian cinema of Ritwik Ghatak. 'What I learned from these cinemas is that to make something new you have to question the premises of the mainstream. In this I have a cultural and a political agenda but I don't have a "way". I believe you have to be committed to the process.'

His work also includes documentaries that are part of African Political Broadcast Series and African Footsteps Series which reflect the connections he makes between the African continent and its diaspora. It's important, he says, to make those connections between the different fragments of the Black world, to keep a sense of the Atlantic. Other films, such as, *Last Angel of History*, *Memory Room 451* and *Mothership Connection* have dealt with the African diaspora through the subject of science-fiction.

'The interest in science-fiction for me has to do with the encounter between Africans and Modernity. Science-fiction narratives are usually about alienation, abduction and transportation and that is a very powerful narrative for understanding the transportation and displacing of African people across the world.'

Akomfrah has focused on black issues but he is certainly not limited to them. His latest film *Speak Like A Child*, about three kids in the North of England and their development into adulthood, reveals the same sensitivity with which he imprints all his work. ■

Catalina Ribalta

John Akomfrah's films are available through Black Audio Films, 21B Brooksby Street, London N1 1EX. Tel: (+44) (0) 171 6076161. Fax: 607 7171.

Reviews continued

film

My Son the Fanatic

directed by **Udayan Prasad**

At the heart of this deceptively slender tale of cross-cultural and generational tensions is a central performance so tender it sometimes makes the heart ache. Indian actor Om Puri mesmerizes as middle-aged taxi driver Parvez – a man whose 25 years hard graft among the Pakistani community in the northern English town of Bradford has brought neither wealth, status, nor true satisfaction.

The well-intentioned Parvez – a man who personifies Britain's fabled tolerance of cultural difference – resonates with suppressed energy. His comfortable, unambitious life ignites into emotional crisis when student son Farid (Akbar Kurtha) suddenly converts to Islamic fundamentalism, leading to an estrangement between the two and the undermining of Parvez's unexamined sense of local and national belonging.

Hired as a regular driver by a visiting German executive, he is asked to introduce one of the local prostitutes he regularly encounters on his route. When Bettina, the young, tough-talking prostitute, proves a sympathetic listener to Parvez's troubles, the two find themselves falling tentatively and touchingly in love, their relationship delicately colliding against their own moral codes and running headlong into countless wider dictates.

Director Udayan Prasad and writer Hanif Kureishi are careful not to let gentle satire against fundamentalism tip over into outright criticism. Although the film deals with wider social issues through emotional conflicts, it does allow the fundamentalist Farid to put his case, albeit in an unconvincing manner. His slogans about truth, purity and identity may sound curiously bloodless, but they do give some indication of the complex spiritual and cultural malaises behind many second generation British Asians' growing interest in fundamentalism.

The unlikely love affair remains at the film's core, but Kureishi's portrayal of women does leave a little to be desired. Despite the luminosity and flinty texture Australian Rachel Griffiths brings to the part of Bettina, the character remains enigmatic and as sketchy in her way as Parvez's wife Minoo, played with a nuanced awareness of split loyalties by Gopi Desai.

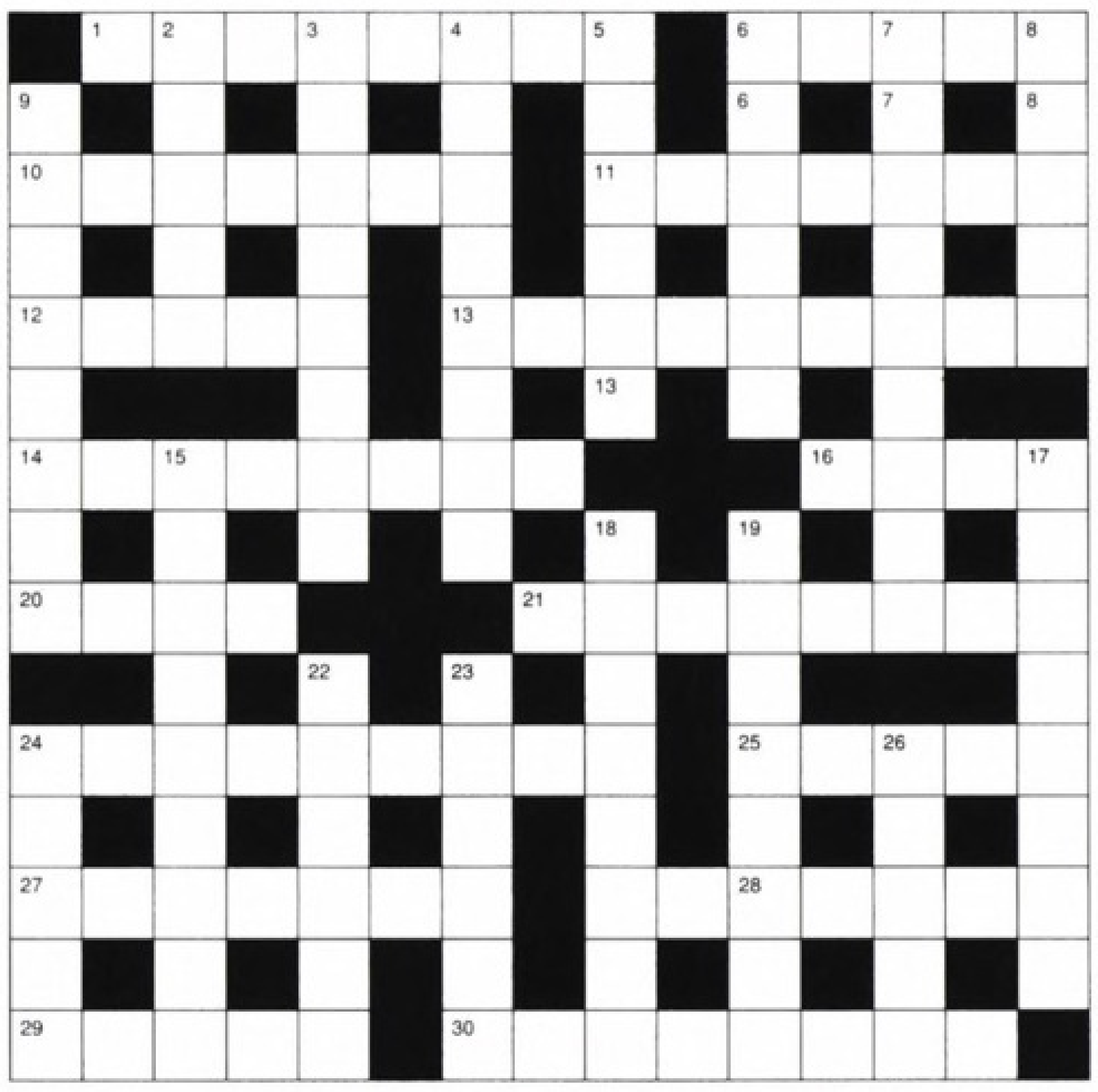
What's particularly appealing about the film however, alongside its fund of humanity, is the creation of Parvez. While he isn't devoid of flaws – his easy-going liberalism topples into a dangerous lack of judgement at times – his depth and warmth provide the film's main weapons against Farid's oppressive spirituality on the one hand and the dead weight of materialism the German executive represents on the other. Kureishi and Prasad have succeeded in crafting an engaging, subtle drama. It's not the most heavyweight affair, but it's all the better for wearing its heart, rather than its message, on its sleeve.

Politics ☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆ EE

Reviewers: **Louise Gray, Malcolm Lewis, Suzanne Methot, Esi Eshun**
Reviews editor: **Vanessa Baird**

The NI Crossword

No. 20 by Axe



CRYPTIC

Across

1 Poles ring street - note the French start opening up in Russia... (8)
6 ...the French church around about in Italy... (5)
10 ...the French say 'How are you' to girl on return in Africa, it's plain (7)
11 Man excites these people (7)
12 First three, in reverse order from 28, go to South African oil town (5)
13 Woolly required on the Caspian Sea? (9)
14 Potassium, hydrogen and lead ore mixed right in Lebanon (8)
16 Animals squealed when turned around (4)
20 Losing an amount at Inchon, little Korean money left (4)
21 Animal always first on the list? (8)
24 Maltreat a model getting brown - get wind of 10 (9)
25 Country where help is backed at home first (5)
27 Vessel, that time in Spain, following incorrect map (7)
28 Lulu - hit, surprisingly, with ANC leader (7)
29 Vehicles from the point discovered Minoan civilization (5)
30 Did she provide a roof over every head? (8)

Down

2 See 24d
3 A sand dank, mottled, on the North Borneo shore (8)
4 African swamp where it's all right for a vehicle from 29 to proceed (8)
5 Camerata hit is in Polynesian setting (6)
6 Inverted collar worn around by African (6)
7 The Russian problem of disguising cache about New York he's on top of (9)
8 Jew loses in the end the place in Germany (5)
9 Bottom subject is above zero - it's a physical number (8)
15 Mysteriously approach Yemeni leader in secret things (9)
17 Russian island in dispute with Harry - in the spirit of the Japanese to the north (8)
18 Upper Mongolia sees change of character and direction and as a result is blooming! (8)
19 Emperor loses his head, cuts off the northern mark (and its king) from the Mediterranean (8)
22 Drink up - oat preparation in dialect (6)
23 No crook doing this stretch! (6)
24,2 Aha! Overall plan is an Anglo-French pact (5-5)
26 Lebanese physician sited above practice (5)

QUICK

Across

1 Russian word, literally 'speaking aloud' (8)
6 Province and city of Apulia, in the 'heel' of Italy (5)
10 Grassland of sub-Saharan Africa (7)
11 Peoples who in the Ancient World were called in Aramaic 'from the other side of the Euphrates' (7)
12 City of Oklahoma, on the Arkansas River (5)
13 Lambswool named from Volga/Caspian Sea inland port (9)
14 Lebanese version of ancient Greek army group (8)
16 African antelopes, wildebeests (4)
20 In Korean currency, 1/100th of a won (4)
21 African edentate, the antbear (8)
24 Humidity-lowering Saharan wind in West Africa (9)
25 Asian country - Sanskrit Bharat (5)
27 Two-handled jar of antiquity (7)
28 Nobel Peace Prize winner, 1960, author of *Let My People Go* (7)
29 Sir Arthur John ——-, excavator of Knossos, Crete (5)
30 British politician, unpopular for abolishing free school milk in Heath's government (1970-4) (8)

Down

2 See 24
3 Important Malaysian port of Sabah, formerly capital of N Borneo (8)
4 River, known as the Cubango in Angola, and marshland of Botswana (8)
5 Largest island in French Polynesia (6)
6 Citizen of North African jamahiriya (6)
7 Caucasus republic of the Russian Federation (9)
8 Ruhr city, the home of Krupps (5)
9 Type of number in physics which denotes the amount of neutrons and protons in a nucleus (8)
15 Vulgate Books of the Old Testament not accepted as canonical by Jews and many Christians (9)
17 Island of the sea of Okhotsk, now in Russian control but disputed by Japan (8)
18 N American tree and its large white, rose or purple flower (8)
19 Sea entered via the 23 of Otranto (8)
22 Spoken dialect (6)
23 The Tatar ——— separates 17 from Russia (6)
24,2 UN-driven pact appeasing Italian invasion of Abyssinia in 1936 (5-5)
26 Islamic splinter group who follow al-Hakim b'illah (996-1021) (5)

LAST MONTH'S SOLUTION

C	O	M	O	■	R	A	Z	O	R	B	I	L	L	■
O	■	E	■	■	■	P	■	M	■	R	■	O	■	G
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Tiger ’flu

When the basics of the *Communist Manifesto* appear as analysis in the *New York Times*, **Steve Eckardt** reckons it’s time to take another look at the economic crisis in Asia.

How ironic that opinion-makers, trying to prevent panic as Asian markets and currencies plunged to unplumbed depths, settled on the phrase ‘Asian ’flu’.

Bad choice. For at that very moment a ’flu virus in Hong Kong poultry was making an extraordinary mutation that enabled it to leap from chickens to humans – a dangerous ‘zoonotic’ mutation of the type that gave us the spectacularly deadly Ebola virus. The Asian ’flu, it seemed, might ravage the world like the Black Plague.

Oops. Could its financial equivalent do the same to the world’s economy? Frankly, it could.

It’s the conjuncture of global ‘over-capacity’ and the collapse of unsustainable Third World economies that account for the sudden appearance of phrases like ‘extremely acute financial panic’ in normally staid publications like the *New York Times* and *The Economist*.

After all, lots of poor nations allegedly ‘emerging’ into First World status have been belly-up for many years now. Northern lenders, with glowing assurances, press Big Plans – dams, superhighways, nuclear reactors – on impoverished nations. The poor countries plunder their resources and pump out their cash in a fruitless race to keep up with interest charges. More loans are piled on to help pay for earlier ones. At last, currencies – the economies behind them now bled white – plummet and the entire venture collapses.

Back home, the bankers get bailed out by (mainly working-class) taxpayers. Seen from ‘overseas’ the bail-out looks more like an enforcement visit from a loan-shark: companies and natural resources are signed over at fire-sale prices and austerity measures are imposed to squeeze even more from the poor.

And so the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. If you’re a lender, it’s a great system – at least until you submerge a region like Asia that accounts for a third of all world trade. True, previous bankrupted countries weren’t quite the financial size of South Korea (the world’s 11th largest economy) or the human size of Indonesia (the world’s fourth-most-populous country).

But it was the coincidence of the Asian disaster with what *New York Times* financial writer Louis Uchitelle describes as ‘a developing worldwide crisis driven mainly by a phenomenon called “over-capacity”’ that got even staid knees shaking. Uchitelle quotes another analyst as saying that the global economy ‘produces more goods even as it suppresses wages... in both industrial and developing countries. You cannot do that – producing more and cutting the wages of those who buy – forever.’ Uchitelle adds that ‘the global economy appears, in effect, to be capable of self-destruction’.

Now *that’s* news – when the basics of the *Communist Manifesto* are printed as analysis in the *New York Times*.

Of course, none of this is news to those who never bought all that nonsense about the ‘triumph of capitalism’, or ‘trickle-down’ wealth ‘raising everyone’s boat’. Nor is it news to the vast numbers of people enduring an economic calamity far worse than anything that has yet befallen the world’s financial capitals. After all, nearly 70 per cent of humanity have never made a phone call, more than 50 per cent lack access to a sanitary toilet and almost a quarter regularly go without enough food.

No, the real news – regardless of what happens with the immediate crisis – is that millions of people in Asia will not accept placidly the draconian cuts in their living standards now being dictated by international lenders. Already, what the *Financial Times* calls the ‘infamously militant South Korean workers’ are on the move. So, too, are the peoples of Indonesia.

Our *New York Times* analyst declares: ‘There IS something to worry about.’ Sounds like some people have started killing chickens – whether you call the disease Asian ’flu or not. ■

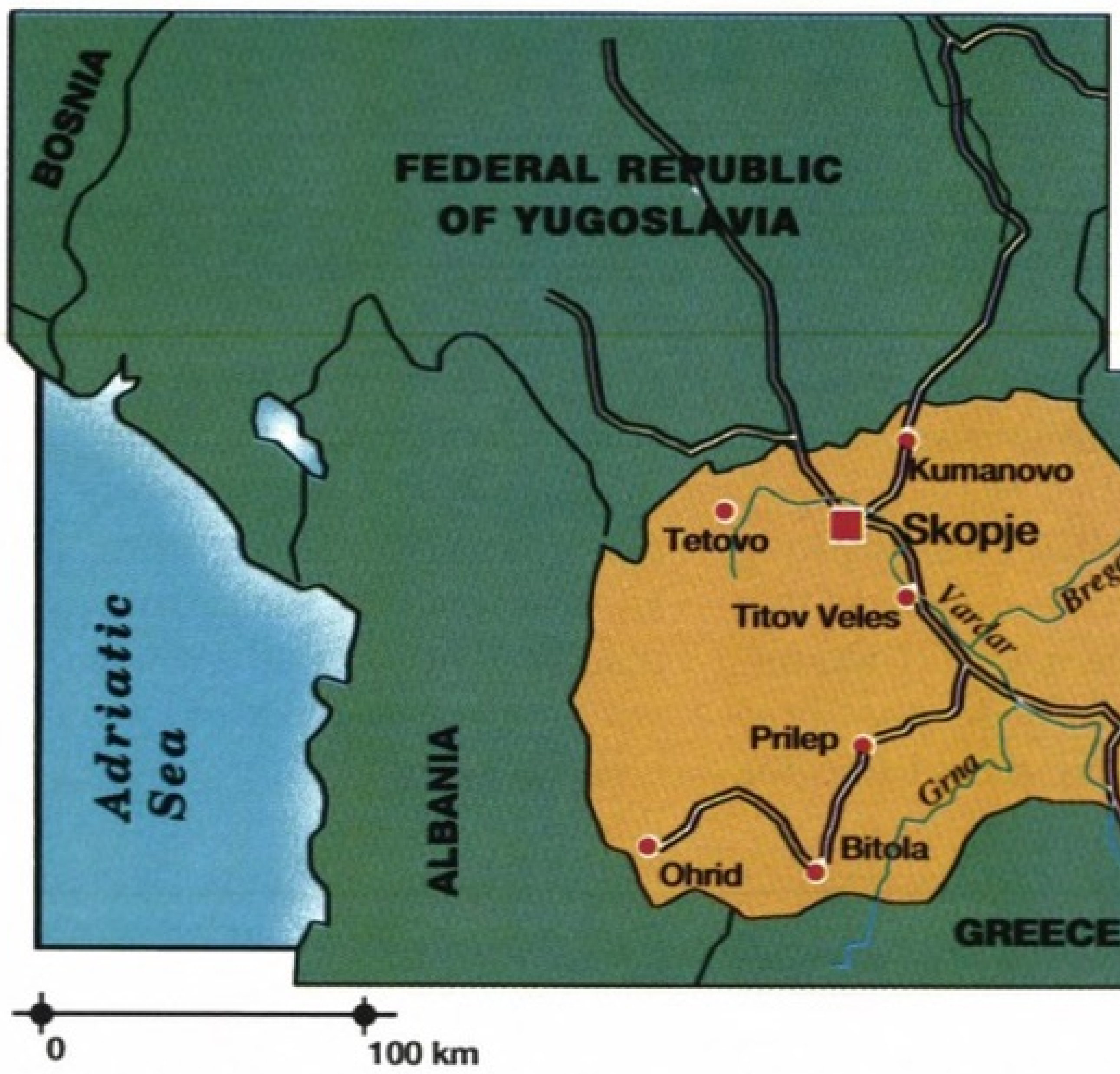
CHRIS STOWERS / PANOS

Contemplating the collapse of the Indonesian economy on the streets of Jakarta.

Steve Eckardt, a Chicago-based writer, invites readers to visit his website [www.SeeingRed.com] and leave comments or questions there.

Country profile

Macedonia



ITEM WORLD GUIDE 1996/97

IN central Skopje two storeys of poured concrete and plate glass house the National Museum of Macedonia. On a Saturday afternoon the place is deserted, except for the warden and some friends who have set up a TV in the entrance hall. They slouch in front of dubbed American soap opera, spellbound. The warden follows me round, switching the lights on and then off as I enter and then leave each gallery in turn.

There is no money to replace the old displays, so they still relate how Macedonia joined Tito's Yugoslavia and fulfilled its destiny. But the Yugoslav Federation, which it left in 1991, is only the most recently discarded of its 'destinies', and the demise of that federation reopens a 'Macedonian Question' of great historical complexity.

The area's strategic position meant that any medieval power wishing to control the southern Balkans had to secure Macedonia. Bulgaria, Byzantium and Serbia all did this when powerful. The region fell to the Turks in the 1380s.

In the nineteenth century, as the Balkans threw off Turkish rule, Britain and Austria feared growing Russian influence there. Macedonia was originally to form part of Bulgaria, but the Western powers insisted that it remain under Turkish rule. They ruled brutally. State-formation meanwhile proceeded apace in Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria, and soon they were ready to take matters into their own hands. They expelled the Turks in the First Balkan War (1912), only to quarrel over how 'free' Macedonia should now be divided. In the event Greece and Serbia partitioned it between them, defeating Bulgaria in a brief second war (1913). Resentment over this treatment is still strong in Bulgaria.

Serbia christened their portion 'South Serbia' and pursued ruthless policies of assimilation there from 1919 to 1941. The Bulgarians, who occupied the territory from 1941 to 1944, often behaved no better.

What then of the Macedonians themselves? Somehow none of the nationalist labels quite stick. Of those who agitated and fought for freedom from Turkey most sought autonomy within a Balkan federation, but some sought union with Bulgaria, with which linguistic ties are closest. After 1945 Tito promoted Macedonian ethnic consciousness as a bulwark against Stalinist Bulgaria. The first grammars of the Macedonian language were published in 1947 and 1952. Democratic Bulgaria has recognized the Macedonian state but not its language, which it calls a Bulgarian dialect.

As sole heir to Alexander's legacy, Greece meanwhile cut off Macedonia's oil supply, arguing that the new state's name implies 'territorial ambitions' in northern Greece where there is a region with the same name.

Macedonia is in no state to fulfil such ambitions, if it has them. The Yugoslav Peoples Army left, taking all its equipment with it. Turbulence in the Balkans has badly damaged the economy. Unemployment is high.

A large Albanian Muslim minority – officially 23 per cent of the population – is also an urgent concern. The tensions are again expressed in arguments about language, this time over creating universities where courses can be taught in Albanian. This Skopje refuses to do.

Conflict in Kosovo, where a largely Albanian population is under quasi-colonial Serb rule, would probably draw western Macedonia into it. The wider conflict which this might trigger would be very frightening.

It is through this thicket of cultural and political claims and counter-claims that Macedonia must find a path. It does not promise to be easy.

Horatio Morpurgo

AT A GLANCE

GAVIN SMITH / CAMERA PRESS

Leader President Kiro Gligorov

Economy GNP per capita $820 (Australia $18,000).
Monetary unit: Denar.
Main exports: Vegetables, sugar beet, cheese, lamb, tobacco, footwear, textiles, metals and ores.
Main imports: Raw materials, machinery, transport equipment, wheat, beef.

People 2.1 million.

Health Infant mortality 26 per 1,000 live births (Japan 4 per 1,000).

Culture 67% of the population is Macedonian, a large minority (22.9%) Albanian. Smaller minorities are made up of Gypsies (2-3%) and Serbs (2-3%).
Religion: Christian Orthodox (majority); Muslim.
Language: Macedonian, written using the Cyrillic script. Albanian, Turkish and Serbian are also spoken.

Sources: *The World Guide 1997/1998; State of the World's Children 1997; Europe Review 1997.*

Not previously profiled

NI star rating

EXCELLENT	★★★★★
GOOD	★★★★
FAIR	★★★
POOR	★★
APPALLING	★

STAR RATINGS

INCOME DISTRIBUTION ★★
The war, the embargo against Serbia, investment-scheme frauds, collapsing state-owned industries – all have taken their toll; 25-30% unemployment.

SELF-RELIANCE ★★
Very dependent on its often unco-operative neighbours. Always among the poorest of the Yugoslav republics, now poorer still.

POSITION OF WOMEN ★★★
Even 10 women out of 120 MPs is an improvement, but under-representation is a key issue in this year's elections.

LITERACY ★★★
Adult literacy rate unavailable. Primary-school enrolment: male 88%, female 87%; secondary-school enrolment: male 53%, female 55%.

FREEDOM ★★★
Some heavy sentences handed down to Albanian activists, but in practice these are always cut short.

LIFE EXPECTANCY ★★★
72 years. Similar to Albania (72) and Bulgaria (71), but less than Greece (78) and the best (Japan, 80).

POLITICS

NI ASSESSMENT ★★
The situation here is a good indicator for the Balkan peninsula as a whole. Its increasing poverty and sharpening ethnic divisions are inseparable from that wider context.

National University *of* Ireland, Galway
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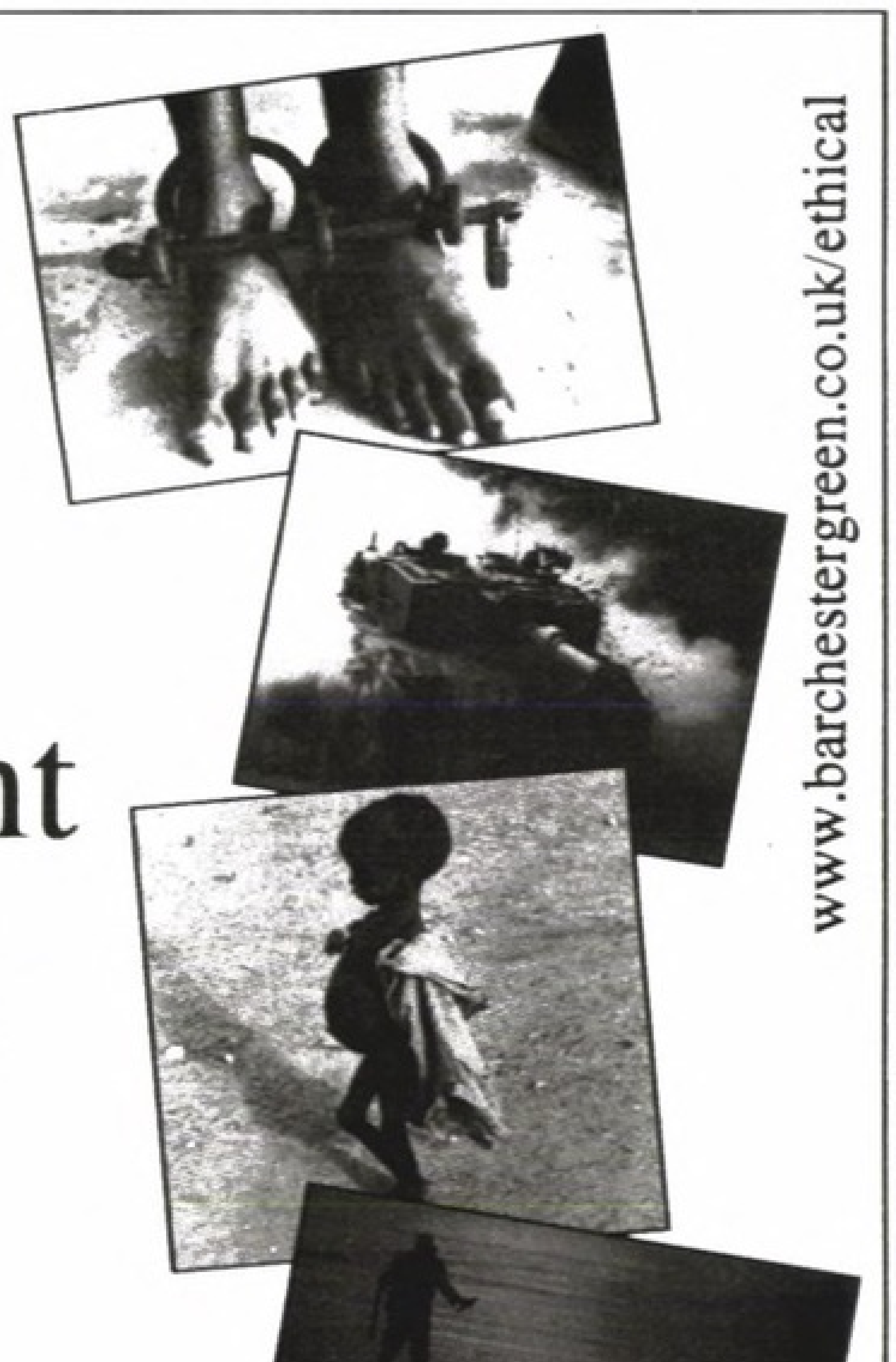

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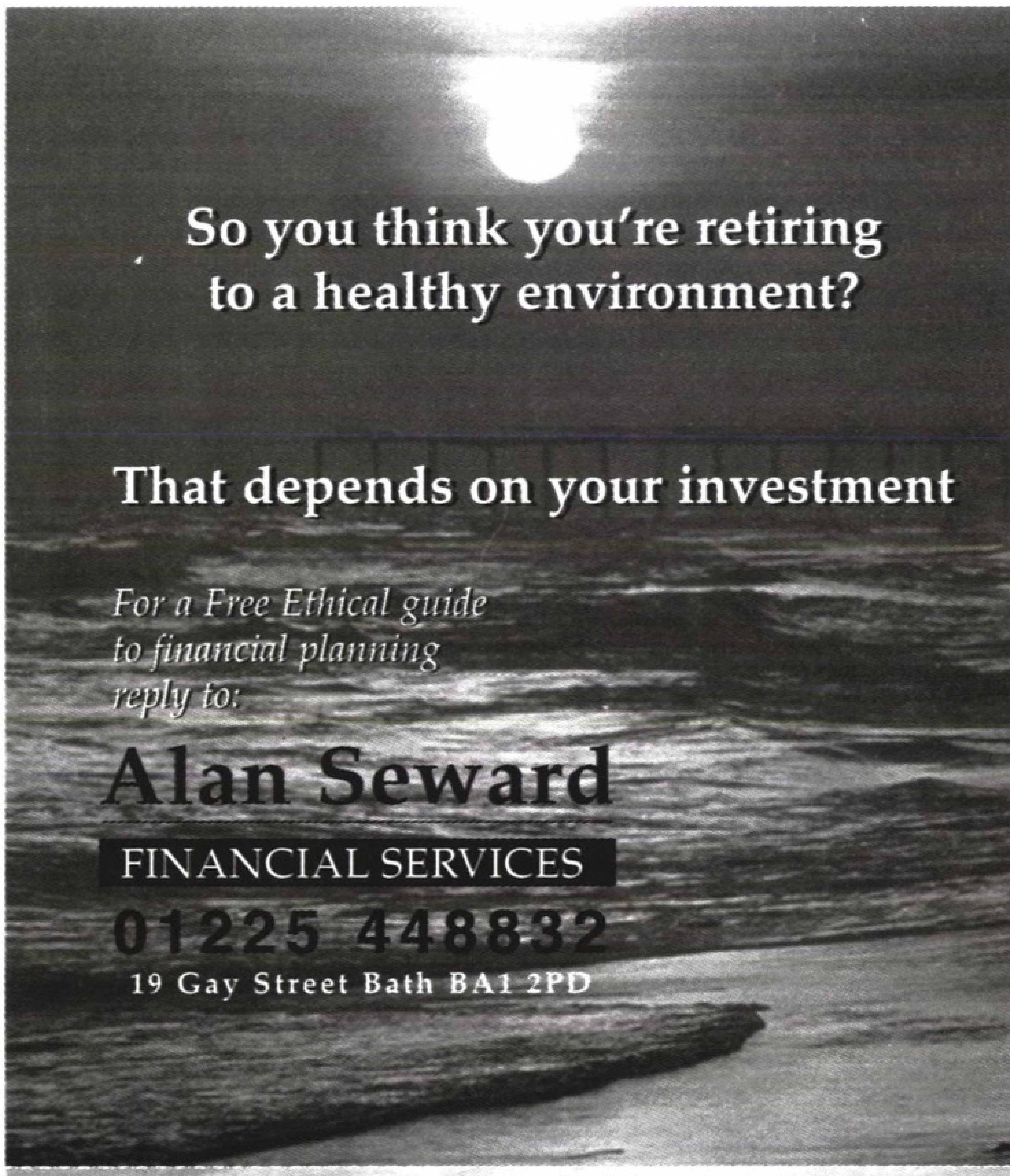

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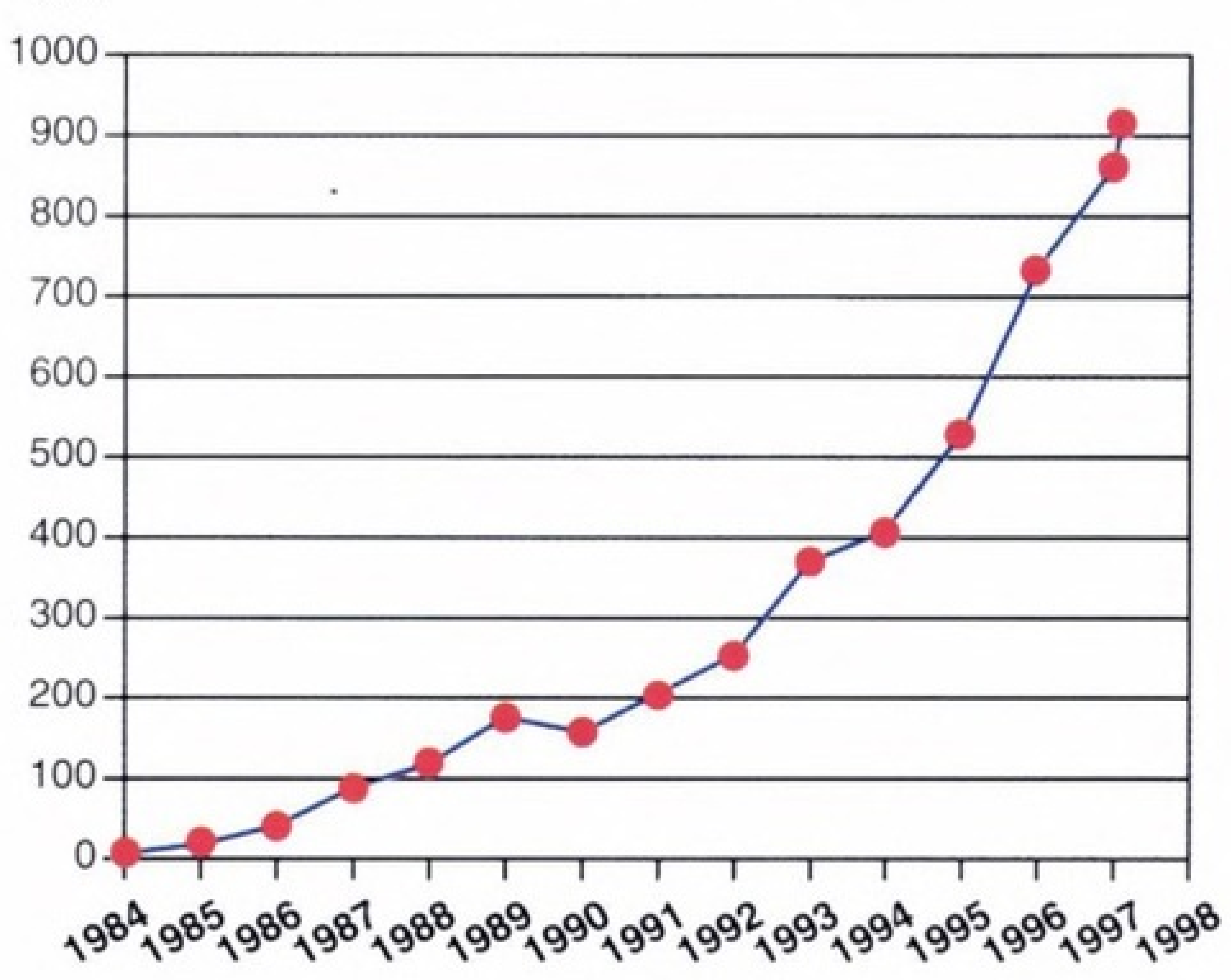

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